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told her that since he had adopted her. And he seemed to like her cool ways and her self-possession, and told her to come there whenever she liked, for he was only going to stay a few days. Then they shook hands, and I remember so well that again as he looked down at the little, bright, dark face, and the flash of the sunlight lit up his own, that feeling came over me of recognising, or knowing it.

We must have been half-way home when, all of a sudden, I stopped still, struck cold and dumb by a thought that came to me. I saw the likeness now. I knew what Sir Rupert's face had said, as I watched it bent over the child's.

It was like hers.

The more I looked the more I seemed to see the likeness—the great flashing brown eyes, the mouth so red and winsome, but which could look so firm, and almost cruel at times; the shape of the head, the carriage of the proud little figure.

My heart seemed to turn cold and sick as I thought of it all, and heard her chattering and laughing so innocently beside me. After a while I grew calmer, and began to tell myself that it was foolishness to bother about a chance likeness; but all the same I wished I could have given master a hint and persuaded him to leave the place. As it was, I said nothing; and Miss Kate told him all about the baronet, and how kind he had been; and the dear old gentleman seemed quite pleased and interested, and even talked of calling on Sir Rupert the next day with Miss Kate.

And it made me feel dreadful to hear them go on so coolly about it, and I thought of the "Lady of Shalott," which Miss Kate had been reading to me, and of how the curse had come upon her all sudden and unexpected. And I was altogether so miserable and low-spirited that even the other servants noticed it, and began to joke and tease, and say I must have had a tiff with my young man, though I hadn't even taken up with one at that time. I did, not long after; but that's nothing to do with this part of my story.

There's no accounting for presentiments, and I had a presentiment that no good would come of that meeting; and sorry, indeed, I felt when Mr. Vining and Miss Kate actually did go off to call on that Baronet the very next afternoon. They were away a long, long time, and

Miss Kate was just wild with excitement when she came back. It was "Sir Rupert this," and "Sir Rupert that," and I almost thought that the old gentleman looked a little sad and down, as if he fancied this new acquaintance had charmed her wayward little heart too much.

Goodness knows what there was about such a man as Sir Rupert to charm a child; but day after day Miss Kate would insist on going up to the Court on some pretence or other; and Mr. Vining always said, "Let her go," and I had to take her. And then she would have the run of the house, such as it was, and the picture-gallery, and the library, and the garden, and that strange man would watch her with his fierce eyes, and talk to her, and tease her, in order to see her little face flush, and her eyes grow big and dark; and to hear her sharp answers, for she was uncommon quick at speech, was Miss Kate.

He began now to question me about her. He had found out she wasn't Mr. Vining's child, of course; but he used to bother me, and lay traps for me, to find out where master had come across her, and I didn't like it, and used to answer very short indeed, for I didn't see what business it was of his at all.

However, one can't fight against fate, I suppose, and one day Sir Rupert called to see master, and they were shut up together the best part of an hour; and I knew something had happened by the face of the poor old gentleman as he opened his study door to let Sir Rupert out.

Soon after, his bell rang, and I went to him, and he was sitting in the arm-chair by the window, looking awfully pale and ill.

"Jane," he says, "bring me some warm brandy and water. I've—I've had a shock, and it tells on me at my age. Don't let the child in till I'm better."

I brought the brandy, and he drank it, and seemed to get better; and then I took courage, and I said to him:

"Oh, sir, it's all along of that horrid Baronet, I know. Why did you ever let him come here, or Miss Kate go to him? I'm sure he's a bad man."

And then, somehow, the poor old gentleman seemed to break down, and he cried there just like a child. And, "Oh," he said, "Jane, my good girl, don't speak ill of him. He came here to-day to tell me his story. And the child—my little Kate—she's his child, Jane—his. And if he

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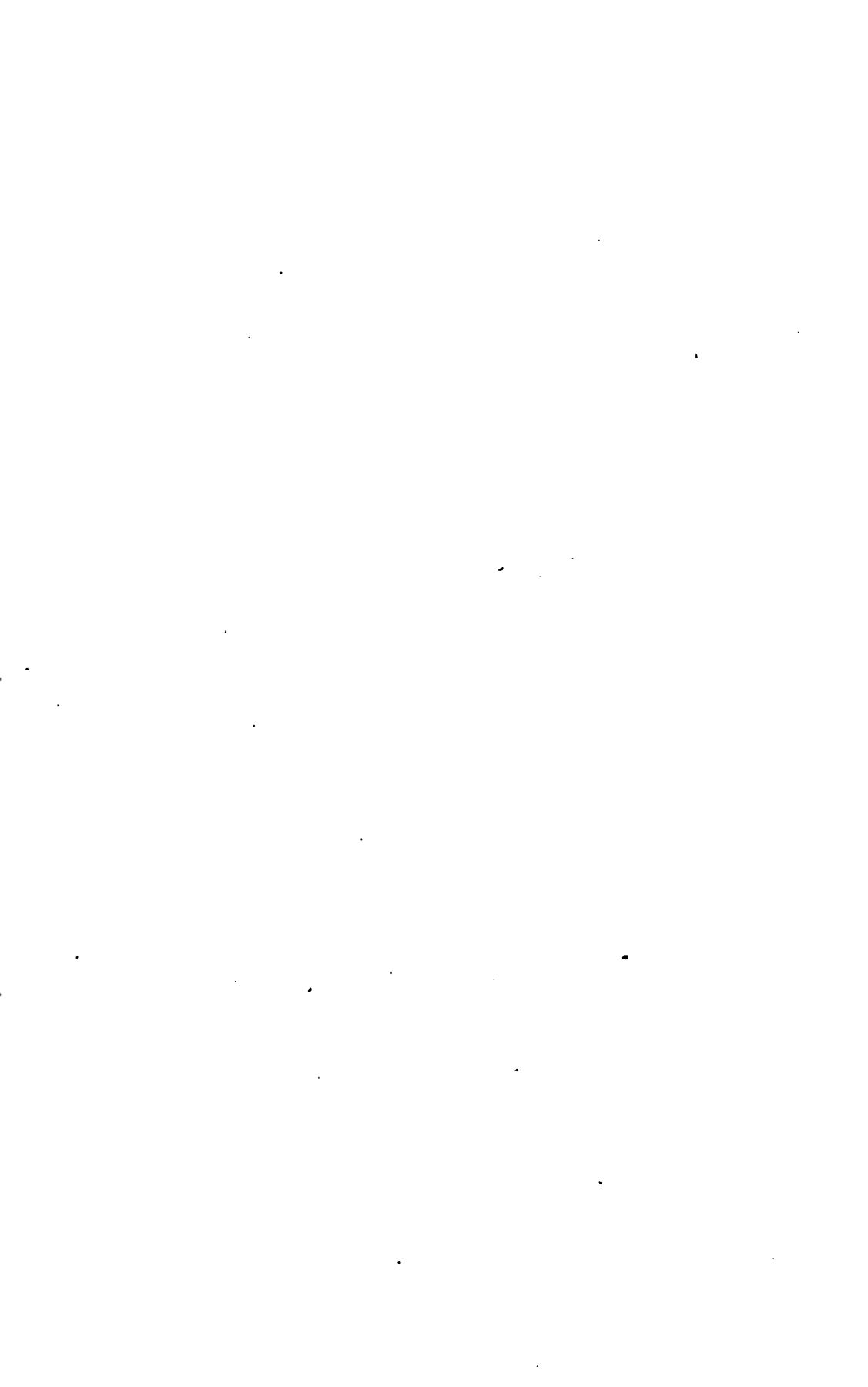
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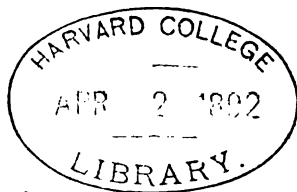
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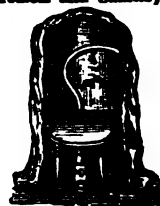
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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Concessit," etc.*

CHAPTER I. THE LITTLE FOUNDLING.

OF course I was not always a caretaker. Everything must have a beginning, and my beginning—once I was old enough to leave home and "do for myself"—was domestic service. I had been fairly well educated—that is to say, I could read and write, and cipher, and do needlework, and turn my hand to most things; for my mother was a sensible, hard-working woman, and, having a large family, brought us up to be useful. And well it was that she did so, considering the ups and downs of life, and how there's never any knowing what one may have to do, before one's done with it—with life, I mean. I'm afraid I'm not very good at my sentences; but it's late in life to take to authorship, though I really may say I am driven to it by loneliness and blackbeetles, which are the plague of one's life in these London kitchens, and no poison or traps seem able to get rid of the nuisance.

A literary lady I once lived with used to say to me, "Style, Jane, style is everything. Never mind about plots, and sensation, and character: give me style. That's what makes the author!" And she was accounted very clever, and very popular; so I suppose she knew what she was talking about. However, as far as "style" goes, I am afraid I shall make a poor show; but my reason for writing this story is to give a truthful account of things that have come under my notice, and that have strangely enough formed themselves

into a history, to which I have become a sort of centre-piece.

Well may people say, "Truth is stranger than fiction." I am sure I have found it so.

I don't know whether, having called my story "Confessions of a Caretaker," I am bound to write of only what happened since I became a caretaker. In that case I should have to be without a sort of first volume to my plot; and it seems to me that, in spite of all the literary lady told me, "style" wouldn't carry that book along. So I must be excused if I go back a little bit and begin with when I was sixteen years of age, and first left home and took a situation.

It was with a very rich old lady and gentleman, who had a beautiful house at Richmond, and I went there as under-housemaid.

What a lovely place they had! Such grounds, and conservatories, and stables, and horses, and carriages—everything heart could wish for; and silver to eat off; and beds all hung with satin; and marble statues in the hall, and pictures that had cost a fortune—and all out of tea!—so I heard from the cook, who had been thirty years with them. And it is an odd thing, but up to the present day I never pass a shop and see "Try our Two-Shilling Sou-chong," or "Take a Sample of our Best Mixed," but I see that house and grounds, and smell the scent of the flowers in that conservatory—so powerful is association!

Well, these two old people, Mr. and Mrs. Vining, had everything money could buy except one thing, and the loss of that one thing was just enough to make them discontented. They had no children, and only a distant relation to inherit all their fortune, and the property that the old

gentleman had got together out of industry and perseverance in the matter of buying and selling tea.

The old lady took it more to heart even than her husband, and many and many a time she has said to me :

"Oh, Jane, I would gladly be poor to-morrow, if only I possessed a child to call me mother." Which seemed to me a bit foolish and sentimental ; for, after all, children are a great bother and worry, not to say expense, and one does not seem to have them very long, and as often as not they turn out badly. I have seen a great deal of them, and I know something about their ways and goings on, and what plagues and torments they can be.

Sometimes, when I was waiting at table with the parlour-maid, the old lady and Mr. Vining would talk about adopting a child, and cook used to say she quite believed it would really end in that—they were so crazy about children.

Well, time went on, and I had been there some six months or so, when one cold winter's day my master and mistress went out in the carriage immediately after lunch, and drove into London. It was between five and six, and I was just coming downstairs after lighting the gas in the corridors and bedrooms, when I heard the sound of wheels on the drive, and then the ringing of the bell. The footman opened the door, and I saw the master coming into the hall, and mistress—her face all excited and laughing—just behind him. Master held something in his arms—a little bundle all wrapped up in a shawl, and, as he saw me :

"Jane," he says, "go and light a fire in the Blue Room and get a warm bath ready, and tell cook to make a basin of bread-and-milk and bring it up there, and make haste like a good girl, for we've got a little stranger here, who's cold, and hungry, and tired, and we must make her comfortable if we can."

A little stranger ! Well—I was staggered when I heard that ; but of course I said nothing, and did as I was told ; and beautiful, indeed, that room looked, being next the mistress's own boudoir, and all hung with pale blue cretonne and tapestry, and such a lovely bed—fit for a Queen—and the fire blazing up in the grate and shining on pictures and furniture. And there master and mistress brought this child, and never shall I forget what it looked like as they opened the shawl and it struggled out, and stood on its own little legs there

before the fire, and flashed its big, staring, brown eyes from one to the other of us.

It was a little gipsy-looking thing, between two and three years of age, I should say ; and, actually, I learnt afterwards, they had got her from the Foundling Hospital. They had been all over it that afternoon with some friend of master's, who was a guardian, or something of that sort, and had been watching the children have their tea, when suddenly this little imp—and an imp she was, as being constituted her nurse, I can safely say—jumps off her stool and runs straight up to master, and looks at him with those eyes of hers flashing and sparkling like jewels, and says she :

"Kiss me—I like you !"

The dear old gentleman, he was quite proud and delighted ; and so it went on, he asking questions and she chattering, baby fashion, and she wouldn't go away from him ; and at last he and mistress had a long talk, and then they spoke to the matron. And how it all went on I don't quite know ; but they brought the child home with them, and there she was.

They asked me to take charge of her that night, and I agreed ; and there was my little lady surrounded with all the luxury and beauty imaginable, and a pretty little creature she was, too, splashing and laughing in her warm, scented bath, and her brown curls all moist and soft about her forehead, and her cheeks like red roses ; and her eyes—well, those eyes have done their work since then, ay, and many and many a tear have they shed—but I always think of them dancing and flashing there in the firelight : so saucy and so lovely, that they did just what they would with us all, especially master.

Well, she had her bath and was dressed in a little white nightgown—for mistress had stopped at an outfitter's on the way home, and bought her no end of things—and then up came the bread-and-milk and was set on a little table by the fire, and I had to feed her.

I mind well now that I tried my best, but it was no use. The young madam wouldn't have it. She made faces, and spit and spluttered all over the place ; and there was master laughing fit to kill himself, and mistress—dear old soul—telling the child it was good for her. Just as if children ever took anything for being told that ; and very few grown-up folks either, I'm afraid.

We had to give it up, and then the

dinner-bell rang, and my little lady jumps up, and says she:

"What's that?"

And master said it was for dinner; and if she didn't roar, and scream, and kick, and declare she must go down, too, and have dinner. And they actually let her; and I had to carry her in, and a fine plague she was, wanting to taste everything, and yelling if they said "No." But at last she got tired and sleepy and I took her to bed, and then sat up there in that lovely room in case she should awake and be frightened; and, says I to myself: "Well, my lady, if you haven't fallen on your feet and done a good stroke for yourself to-day, my name isn't Jane Watta."

After a while mistress came up, and she talked so nice to me, and asked me if I would be nurse to the child, and see to her, and that we should have two nice rooms, and my wages would be raised; and so, with one thing and another, I thought I'd say "Yes," as I'd been used to children at home, and thought I could manage young madam if I tried. But she was a handful—the most mischievous young monkey I ever did see—and so full of spirits, she never seemed to tire.

I was afraid she hadn't come of a very good stock, judging by her tastes, for we couldn't keep her out of the kitchen; and as for meals, she loved nothing better than to rush down there at dinner or supper-time, and eat salt pork and pickles, or spring onions and cheese, and sausages and kippers, and such like, which are not the victuals I've seen the gentlefolk eat—though maybe they'd like to for a change. And as sure as ever she'd slip away from me, I was pretty sure to find her with cook, or else in the stables with the coachman. He was a married man, and had two little boys; and there was nothing she liked better than to play with them; and oh, my!—the tricks of those urchins, they'd make your hair stand on end to hear of. But, there, what is in children beats me.

There's a newfangled philosophy I've heard of, which says that new souls are not created for each new birth, but that old ones—some of them thousands and thousands of years old are pitchforked into new bodies, and have to keep on living again and again until the wickedness is knocked out of them. I don't know if I've got the idea right, but it's very near the mark, only not so well expressed as a real author would put it. If so, that

accounts perhaps for their "ready-made wickedness"; for it doesn't seem natural that a new-fashioned, innocent little soul, should be all ripe and ready for mischief when no one's ever told it what evil is.

But to return to Miss Kate, as she was called, for master said she reminded him of some one in a book or a play who was a regular little shrew, and whose name was Katherine. And so he named the little girl he had adopted after her; and, goodness knows, she promised to be a shrew also at first; but she was one of those children who are best ruled by love, and she did love master—and no wonder, for I'm sure a better man never lived in this world.

Well, for two years I was nurse to Miss Kate; and for two years she ran wild, and just did as she pleased, only that I had got her to mind me, and could manage her pretty well. She was as lovely as a picture, and, really, no one could help loving her and spoiling her; and as for the old people, they were downright silly about her. If she'd been their own, they could not have made more fuss; and she certainly put life into the house, and kept us all on the go one way or other.

When she was five years old they had a governess for her; but she didn't seem able to teach her much, for all the child cared for was music and pictures. Whenever she didn't want to do any lessons, she would just go to master in her coaxing way and say:

"Dad"—she always called him that—"please, Kate's tired, and the books make her head ache." And then she would look at him with those eyes, and then it was all over. She had her way, and Miss Gresham would sort of sigh in despair and say:

"What am I to do if the child won't learn, and no one can make her?"

I used to say: "Oh, let her be, ma'am. There's time enough, and, perhaps, she'll alter." And, strange to say she did alter—and quite suddenly—and took a perfect craze for reading and being read to, and by the time she was eight years old she was for ever with a book in her hand, and ever so much quieter and better-behaved than she used to be.

It was just about this time that a great grief overtook the quiet, pleasant home at Richmond. The old lady, our dear, gentle mistress, died quite suddenly, and not one of us I am sure but felt her loss as a loss, and grieved for poor old master, who was

like one dazed and stunned by his sorrow. And how that child laid aside all her wild ways and comforted him—it was wonderful. It's my opinion he would not have eaten or slept if it had not been for her. But there, the way she'd talk, it would make the tears come into your eyes to hear her!—and so wise, and pretty, and sensible. Many's the time I've heard the poor old gentleman telling how he blessed the day he had ever brought her to his home.

After the funeral was over, the master seemed as if he couldn't bear the house, and it was shut up and the servants put on board wages, and Miss Kate and I went away into Devonshire for a time. It was the spring of the year, I remember, and a lovely spring it was, and master he took a small house near the sea and engaged a couple of servants, and very happy we all were; at least, I'm sure, Miss Kate and I were, and the old gentleman seemed to grow more reconciled to his loss after a time, and the child was just his shadow; and how dearly they grew to love each other it passes my power to say.

And now comes one of the curious parts of this story that I'm going to write, and that made me say in the beginning of it, "Truth is stranger than fiction." Yet who'd have thought all that was to come as consequence, ay, and misfortune and trouble, too, from just their going to that little Devonshire village!

CHAPTER II. A DISCOVERY.

Now and then in our wanderings Miss Kate and I had passed a great, wild, rambling sort of place—very much out of repair—and with no one living in it, to judge from appearances. We could see the house, of grey stone and covered in ivy and climbing creeper, from the road, and the old woman at the lodge told us it belonged to a Sir Rupert Dayrell—a man of whom no one had a good word to say. He was a gambler and spendthrift; a man of violent temper and vicious habits, and his youth had been celebrated for the wild and reckless things he used to do. For years he had lived abroad, and no one knew anything about him for certain. An old butler and his wife lived in the house, which, by the way, was called Dayrell Court, and took care of it; and there was Mrs. Crossley at the lodge, and her husband used to do a bit of gardening and just trim the lawn, or see to the flower-beds, and that was all the care the place

got. Somehow Miss Kate took an awful fancy to it, and two or three times a week she would drop in at the lodge and have a cup of tea with Mrs. Crossley, and get permission to wander through the lovely, wild grounds, which certainly were beautiful in their way, and a sight to see as the summer-time came on, and wistaria, and clematis, and honeysuckle began to bloom, and roses to bud; and the scents and the colour made the whole place as lovely as a dream, though, now I think of it, some dreams aren't lovely at all.

One day we were both at the lodge as usual, and Mrs. Crossley and I were having a bit of a gossip after tea, and neither of us noticed that Miss Kate had slipped away. At last I missed her, and thinking she was only about the lawn or feeding the swans on the lake, I started off to find her. An avenue led up from the lodge to the house, and ended in a large open space—weed-grown now and with the gold of the gravel turned to rusty-brown—and there was a terrace with steps leading up, and some of the windows opened on to it; and, standing just by one of those windows, which I knew belonged to the library, I saw Miss Kate and a gentleman.

I stared and stopped dead short; but presently I thought I'd better go on and see what my young lady was up to. She saw me coming, and she turned as cool as you please to me and said:

"Jane—this is Sir Rupert Dayrell. He came home to-day, and no one knew anything about it. I've been explaining why I'm here, and he doesn't mind; but at first he was very cross. Weren't you?"

And she turned calmly, to the grim, dark man standing there, the very look of whose face made me feel terrified.

He just glanced at me; but it gave me the oddest feeling. I can't say what it was, but something in the flash of his eyes, the cold, grim smile of the lips, seemed to bring back some memory. I couldn't say what; but I felt it. It was like a face I knew, yet didn't know; and I must say I was very uncomfortable for a few moments as I stood there and heard that little audacious thing chattering away to him quite confidential, and as if he was for all the world no one in particular, and certainly not a wild and wicked baronet, with an evil reputation and the temper of a fiend, as report said.

He asked her name, and she told him it was Katherine Vining; for master had always

told her that since he had adopted her. And he seemed to like her cool ways and her self-possession, and told her to come there whenever she liked, for he was only going to stay a few days. Then they shook hands, and I remember so well that again as he looked down at the little, bright, dark face, and the flash of the sunlight lit up his own, that feeling came over me of recognising, or knowing it.

We must have been half-way home when, all of a sudden, I stopped still, struck cold and dumb by a thought that came to me. I saw the likeness now. I knew what Sir Rupert's face had said, as I watched it bent over the child's.

It was like hers.

The more I looked the more I seemed to see the likeness—the great flashing brown eyes, the mouth so red and winsome, but which could look so firm, and almost cruel at times; the shape of the head, the carriage of the proud little figure.

My heart seemed to turn cold and sick as I thought of it all, and heard her chattering and laughing so innocently beside me. After a while I grew calmer, and began to tell myself that it was foolishness to bother about a chance likeness; but all the same I wished I could have given master a hint and persuaded him to leave the place. As it was, I said nothing; and Miss Kate told him all about the baronet, and how kind he had been; and the dear old gentleman seemed quite pleased and interested, and even talked of calling on Sir Rupert the next day with Miss Kate.

And it made me feel dreadful to hear them go on so coolly about it, and I thought of the "Lady of Shalott," which Miss Kate had been reading to me, and of how the curse had come upon her all sudden and unexpected. And I was altogether so miserable and low-spirited that even the other servants noticed it, and began to joke and tease, and say I must have had a tiff with my young man, though I hadn't even taken up with one at that time. I did, not long after; but that's nothing to do with this part of my story.

There's no accounting for presentiments, and I had a presentiment that no good would come of that meeting; and sorry, indeed, I felt when Mr. Vining and Miss Kate actually did go off to call on that Baronet the very next afternoon. They were away a long, long time, and

Miss Kate was just wild with excitement when she came back. It was "Sir Rupert this," and "Sir Rupert that," and I almost thought that the old gentleman looked a little sad and down, as if he fancied this new acquaintance had charmed her wayward little heart too much.

Goodness knows what there was about such a man as Sir Rupert to charm a child; but day after day Miss Kate would insist on going up to the Court on some pretence or other; and Mr. Vining always said, "Let her go," and I had to take her. And then she would have the run of the house, such as it was, and the picture-gallery, and the library, and the garden, and that strange man would watch her with his fierce eyes, and talk to her, and tease her, in order to see her little face flush, and her eyes grow big and dark; and to hear her sharp answers, for she was uncommon quick at speech, was Miss Kate.

He began now to question me about her. He had found out she wasn't Mr. Vining's child, of course; but he used to bother me, and lay traps for me, to find out where master had come across her, and I didn't like it, and used to answer very short indeed, for I didn't see what business it was of his at all.

However, one can't fight against fate, I suppose, and one day Sir Rupert called to see master, and they were shut up together the best part of an hour; and I knew something had happened by the face of the poor old gentleman as he opened his study door to let Sir Rupert out.

Soon after, his bell rang, and I went to him, and he was sitting in the arm-chair by the window, looking awfully pale and ill.

"Jane," he says, "bring me some warm brandy and water. I've—I've had a shock, and it tells on me at my age. Don't let the child in till I'm better."

I brought the brandy, and he drank it, and seemed to get better; and then I took courage, and I said to him:

"Oh, sir, it's all along of that horrid Baronet, I know. Why did you ever let him come here, or Miss Kate go to him? I'm sure he's a bad man."

And then, somehow, the poor old gentleman seemed to break down, and he cried there just like a child. And, "Oh," he said, "Jane, my good girl, don't speak ill of him. He came here to-day to tell me his story. And the child—my little Kate—she's his child, Jane—his. And if he

chose he could take her from me to-morrow. But he's a kinder-hearted man than we have supposed, and he's promised he won't enforce his claim while I live, nor even tell her the story. Such a pitiful story it is, too. Heaven forbid it should blight the life of my bright little flower!"

And though I didn't really learn the story till long, long afterwards, I may as well put it down here, for I'm not one as holds with mystifying, and throwing dust in people's eyes, so as to make them read on to the end of a book to know what it's all about.

Sir Rupert, according to his version of the tale, had fallen in love, and married a wild, gipsy-like, and most beautiful creature, whom he had seen acting in a provincial theatre. They lived together for about a year—not very happily, for she was passionate and jealous, and he—well, his face would tell any one what he was. Then he had to go abroad, and left her at some little, quiet place not far from London, in lodgings. He wrote to her, but she never answered, and after a time he grew uneasy, and came back to see what was the matter. He heard she had left the lodgings a week after she had been to them, and told the people she was going back to the stage—her old life. Sir Rupert was mad at hearing this, and tried all he could to trace her out, but he never succeeded. Only one day he got a letter, and she said she was dying, and told him that she had had a child, and been obliged to give up the stage for a time; but, as she hated children, and didn't know how or where to find him, she had sent it to the Foundling Hospital, and then gone back to her old life, but had fallen ill, and into great poverty and distress, and now was dying, and didn't know if he would ever get her letter at all; but had found out he had a place in Devon—this very Dayrell Court—and sent her letter there on chance. He never saw her alive; but he found out where she died, and had been buried; and then tried to discover something about the child. But 'twas no use. He didn't even know its sex, nor what time it had been taken to the Foundling Home. And there it might all have ended, but for our coming to this very place, and his seeing Miss Kate, and being struck with the likeness between them, for, as I said, she was the moral image of her father; and, of course, Mr. Vining could tell him her age, and the date of her arrival, and it all fitted in

exact; and the old gentleman, at all events, was sure of it.

But the long and short of the matter was, that he wouldn't claim the child as long as master lived, though it's my belief he wasn't disinterested enough to promise that for nothing. I'm more than sure master paid him a pretty heavy price for his silence, and naturally he wasn't sorry to have the child educated and brought up free of expense to him, leaving out of the question that she'd be master's heiress in the long run. Oh, I took Sir Rupert's measure, and I wasn't far wrong; and when I think of that time and of my poor dear—and all she's had to bear and endure—I feel—well—pretty nigh as bad as any murderer that's now a waxwork effigy at Madame Tussaud's, and that's saying a good deal, for they must be bad before they get there!

THE POLICEMAN'S DIARY.

As the policeman on his nightly round throws the light of his lantern on closely-barred doors and darkened windows, those who are awake, and hear the measured tramp of his footsteps, may think of him as the modern representative of the ancient night-watch, whose sonorous call of the passing hours was still to be heard in the streets within the present century. The watch, or nightly patrol, and the constable, or parochial guardian of the peace, have brought us to the modern policeman, who officially is called constable, and who bears the truncheon and badge of that ancient office. And, as far as the Metropolitan Police are concerned, they inherit, in some measure, the traditions of a previous more loosely-organised force, as the Bow Street runners, so famous of old for their clever captures, were succeeded by the modern detective.

From the first formation of the Metropolitan Police, under the well-known Act of Parliament, introduced by Sir Robert Peel, the head-quarters of the force have been at Scotland Yard. And the "Yard" still remains, with its old-fashioned, sombre air, and thickly clustered buildings, practically unchanged among all the startling changes which have taken place in the neighbourhood. Ere long the old "head-quarters" will be replaced by a massive structure on the Embankment. But for the present, here in this nest of closely

compressed offices, and station-house, and stores, is the centre of the world for the Metropolitan Police, and at Scotland Yard must the candidate for employment in the police present himself.

Candidates there always are in plenty, and the bulk of them come from the agricultural districts. Londoners rarely possess the requisite physique—for the requirements under this head are very strict. A candidate must be under twenty-seven years of age, and he must stand a clear five feet nine inches without his shoes. He must be able to read and write, and show general intelligence, and it may be noted that the educational standard is more strictly adhered to than of old. But the indispensable condition is that he should be of absolutely sound constitution—a whole man, with a good chest developement and vigorous limbs, and then even the most vigorous son of Anak may be rejected if his eyesight be not perfectly clear. But if the candidate be possessed of all these physical perfections joined to intellectual competency, and can produce satisfactory testimonials of character, then he may reckon pretty surely on being enrolled as a recruit, and directed to join the recruits' depôt in Kennington Lane.

Attached to this depôt is a spacious drill-ground, and here during the first fortnight of his career the recruit will be initiated into the mysteries of the goose step, and taught the elements of marching drill. When he is dismissed from the drill-ground, he will find instruction awaiting him on the various points of a constable's duties—and presently, in a fortnight or three weeks from joining, he will be posted to one of the police-stations of his destined division. And that destination affords a tolerable variety of choice. For the Metropolitan Police district embraces a circuit of fifteen miles from Charing Cross, excluding of course the City bounds, and extends to within three or four miles of St. Albans on the north and to the heaths of Surrey, about Chipstead, on the south; while on the east it covers a considerable portion of Essex, and westward stretches as far as Staines Moor. And thus the future beat of the probationer may be among the palaces of Belgravia, or the slums of Whitechapel; he may be introduced to the whirl and bustle of Piccadilly, or relegated to the seclusion of Perivale.

When reported fit for duty the recruit becomes a full constable, and his constable's

pay begins. He has already been provided with his outfit, which consists of two complete suits of uniform, including great-coats and helmets; his boots, his waterproof cape, his armlet, his whistle, his lantern-guard and belt, with his redoubtable truncheon. This last, by the way, is no longer carried in a sheath dependent from the belt, but in a pocket attached to the outer seam of the trousers. The bâton itself is of altered form, and less massive than of old, but is equally formidable, and is made of the tough and closely-grained cocoon wood.

Thus equipped and ready for duty, the newly-made constable parades at a quarter to six one morning in the station-yard with the rest of the sub-division. The Inspector walks round and looks over the men, to see that uniform and general appearance are neat and tidy. The orders for the day are given, and information as to lost or stolen property, men or women wanted, and various matters as to which the constable is to keep his eyes open. Then away he marches with his section, headed by the sergeant, and tramps along till he reaches the beat assigned to him, when the constable who has been on duty all night gladly vacates his post in his favour.

Then the constable begins to traverse his beat with measured tread: he is to walk at the rate of two miles and a half an hour, on the kerb side of the pavement; not to loiter or gossip, but to give his attention to what goes on about him, and to keep his eye upon suspicious characters. His duties, stated generally, are—to protect life and property; to apprehend criminals and suspected persons; to take charge of persons injured or found insensible in the streets; to pick up stray children, and capture lost dogs.

In all probability the morning round will be uneventful. The roysterers have gone home or been hauled away; workmen are hurrying to their work; the milkman is abroad with his melancholy cry; houses show signs of life; early traders begin to open shop; and the day gradually awakes, till by ten o'clock the bustle of the morning is well over, and the neighbourhood, if a suburban one, has assumed its customary calm.

At ten o'clock, or soon after, comes the welcome tread of the relieving force, and our constable, having greeted the arrival of his successor, makes his way back to the station-house, and reports himself "off duty."

As the station-house will probably be the young man's home for the next few years, a short description of it will here be in place. It is probably a square, substantial building, with a couple of projecting wings to the rear, which enclose a paved yard. On one side of the public entrance is the charge-room, where persons arrested by the police are brought, and the large against them entered by the Inspector. A desk for the latter occupies the centre, and at the end of the room is a little iron enclosure, where the assumed culprit is placed during the investigation. Out of the charge-room a passage leads to the cell, probably empty during the day-meal, and scrubbed scrupulously clean; at somewhat meagrely furnished with a few wooden divan round two of its sides. The rest of the ground-floor of the station-house is occupied by various offices, above which will probably be found the quarters of a couple of married Inspectors, as well as of a married constable, who acts as pretaker; while a side door gives access to the constables' quarters, which bear the name of section-houses.

Clattering down the stone steps into the basement come twenty or thirty young constables just released from duty, and as shyly conscious of the release as so many schoolboys. Coats, tunics, and helmets are hung up in the cloak-room; soap-baths and splashing are going on in the lavatories. If a bath is desired, there are the baths with hot or cold water ad libitum. A glance into the kitchen reveals a glowing range, from which proceeds an appealing perfume of baked meats; the racks and dressers loaded with plates and dishes, and everything gives promise of an early and substantial dinner.

True it is that this fair promise may be lighted — a sudden call of duty may demand the presence of every available man in the streets, and the dinner be left to spoil. But in the case we are now considering all goes well; the mess-room is presently occupied by a jolly substantial party, and a good plain dinner served piping hot. The management of all this is in the hands of the men themselves; they appoint a caterer and a cook, and the expenses are apportioned among them, while the plant of the kitchen and the mess-room are provided out of the police funds.

When the meal is over, uniforms are washed and accoutrements polished in readiness for the afternoon parade at a

quarter to two. The routine of the morning is gone through again, and the constable rejoins his beat, and has another four hours of its monotonous round, varied by an occasional visit from his sergeant or Inspector. At six o'clock comes the welcome relief, and the constable, off duty once more, has probably the evening before him for rest and relaxation. He has walked about twenty miles over the stones, and if his feet are not yet inured to the pavement, he will probably be tired and foot-sore. The recreation-room is open to him, furnished with chess and draughts and a small-sized billiard-table. The balls rattle merrily amid a cloud of tobacco-smoke. The young fellows, in loose coats or shirt sleeves, tall, well-made and limber, and full of fun and chaff, are hardly to be recognised as the stalwart, rigid-looking men in blue who daily and nightly patrol the streets. Or, for the more studiously inclined, there is the reading-room and library, and for the athletic there are single-sticks and boxing-gloves, and, at the river-side stations, there are police boats and rowing clubs to occupy the summer evenings. If the tyro prove of musical tastes, he will probably be enlisted in the divisional band, and will devote an hour or two to practice with his comrades.

Next morning the constable parades at a quarter to ten, and his duty on his beat lasts till two. He goes on again at six in the evening and works his beat till ten. He will have less time on his hands this night, and will probably take a hasty snack and turn in, for he parades to-morrow at 5.45. And so on, all over again, till a whole month has elapsed, when his accustomed beat knows him no more for awhile. For he is now put upon night duty, and that, as may be imagined, causes a complete revolution in his mode of life.

According to the rules of the service, one month's day duty is succeeded by two months of night duty, and without doubt this last is the most trying and harassing part of the constable's existence. Night duty is uniform. Eight consecutive hours of it, from ten p.m. to six a.m., make a heavy call upon the endurance of the novice, for there is no break in this long stretch of duty. From ten o'clock at night till six next morning the constable is on the march. The beats are differently arranged from those of the day service. They are shorter, necessarily, as a much larger number of men are on duty at night. Three-fifths of the whole force available

for street protection are thus employed. The other two-fifths are spread over what may be called the sixteen waking hours of the day in alternate watches of four hours each, so that only about one-fifth of the force is on duty at any one time during the day. Hence, the night-force is treble that of the day, and the beats are proportionately diminished; but they have, of course, to be traversed all the more often. More frequent, too, are the visits of sergeants and inspectors.

Marching to his beat, then, the night policeman begins his round, taking the inner side of the pavement now, and throwing the light of his lantern upon the various premises he passes, if perchance he shall find door or window unsecured, or any lurking depredator hovering among the deep shadows of the night. As houses of entertainment close their doors, the streets in their neighbourhood become more noisy, and among the throng, most of whom are wending their way homewards, there are perhaps a few excited by drink, and quarrelsome in their cups, who fall to blows and menaces, when suddenly a crowd gathers about the combatants with cries and yells, and a regular disturbance is imminent. The appearance of the constable's lamp in the distance is generally the signal for the friends of the combatants to hurry them off in rapid retreat; but sometimes they hold their ground, and even, perhaps, show fight against the constable himself. If the disorder increases, the constable calls assistance by blowing his whistle. Other policemen are soon on the scene, arrests are made of the chief disturbers of the peace, and they are hurried away to the police-station. If a man resists arrest, the constable is bound to overcome his resistance as tenderly as may be, but still to overpower him.

The station-house is now in full tide of business, with gas-lights burning bright, and the staff within on the alert. The persons arrested are brought in and hurried into the little iron dock. The Inspector hears the charge, and if he entertains it, the prisoners are haled off to the cells, now beginning to be fully occupied.

When our constable returns to his beat, the streets are probably deserted. A few homeless outcasts are lurking here and there, a footstep approaches now and then; but otherwise there is nothing to attract attention but long rows of slumbering houses, with workshops, yards, and factories, over all which the policeman casts a watch-

ful eye. But if the constable's beat is in a more central part of the town, the bustle and turmoil of the streets will be much later in dying away. In the St. James's and Holborn division, where pleasure-seekers of all sorts resort, and where much of the amusement and dissipation of the metropolis are concentrated, it may be imagined what a stir is created by the successive closing of all places of entertainment and refreshment, when, according to the computation of the police, a crowd of from twenty to fifty thousand people are gathered in a compass of no very great extent radiating from Piccadilly Circus, with cabs and carriages dashing about in all directions; while although a considerable part of the crowd is only bent on reaching home as soon as possible, yet "a large proportion, chiefly young men, of all grades of society, remain to promenade," and, as might be suspected, attract to the neighbourhood a gathering of the most unhappy and least estimable characters from all parts of the metropolis.

If his lot be cast in this part of the town, the constable may expect to enjoy a lively time of it in the small hours of the morning. But perhaps his lot is preferable to that of one who has to patrol the more outlying suburbs of the metropolis, where stretches of gloomy waste intersect the newly-built houses, some unfinished and empty, the lurking-place of all kinds of queer characters, and where the beats are so extensive that the constable is at times isolated, and out of the reach of assistance. Preferable to such a beat is one in the very slums of the East End, although a dockside neighbourhood, where foreign sailors congregate, where quarrels are frequent, and knives are speedily drawn, has its own particular dangers.

But wherever the constable may be posted, the night, though long, will come to an end at last, and in the dusky glimmer of dawn, the tramp of the approaching relief comes as a joyful sound to the weary constable. Is he soaked and dripping with wet? Is he powdered with the rime and frost of a winter's night? Anyhow, he looks forward with zest to the warmth and comfort of the section-house. His dripping garments are hung up in the drying-room, and, after a hasty supper, which some might call an early breakfast, he thankfully turns into the comfortable bed that awaits him. As the constables on night duty sleep in a separate section of the building from the day duty men, there is nothing to

disturb his slumbers, unless he receives an awakening summons from the Inspector to go to the police-court and give evidence about the disturbance of the previous night, and the case of those prisoners in the cells, for whom black Maria, otherwise the police-van, is waiting in the yard.

The case in which he is concerned being disposed of, the constable's time is his own. He may resume his interrupted slumbers if he likes and is wise, or he may go out and visit his friends, if he has any near at hand, or he may smoke and doze over the mess-room fire. For him the midnight sun is shining at noon, and he must sleep when everybody else is astir. And so he makes his breakfast when other people are at tea. For there is ten o'clock at night always waiting for him; that steady, respectable hour, associated in other people's minds with going early to bed, but for him the beginning of the arduous work of the day.

And then he is always liable to be warned for sudden duty in case of emergency. For in effect the night duty men are the reserve force of the police. Here are nearly five thousand men, sleeping and resting after the fatigue of a whole night in the streets; and nearly all these are available at the command of the Chief Commissioner for repressing any riot or disturbance. It is a reserve that cannot be drawn upon *ad libitum*, because there is a limit to what men can do, deprived of sleep for a long succession of hours; but as far as the men are concerned, such extra duty is taken cheerfully enough, as was shown during the pressure of the Trafalgar Square disturbances.

So far we have accompanied our newly-fledged constable through a day and a night of his usual duty. Pursued further, the diary might become monotonous. So far we have dealt only with the constable on the beat and in his section-house. A fair proportion of the force, it may be guessed, are married; and as a rule there are no quarters provided for the married constables. He must hire a small house, or take lodgings, and the cost of such contrasts unpleasantly with the shilling a week lodging money deducted from his pay, which, in his bachelor days, provided him with so many advantages: his comfortable quarters, a mess where his meals were served him at prime cost, recreation for his leisure hours, and the society of comrades bound together by a strong *esprit de corps*. For the young, un-

married constable, his pay, beginning at twenty-four shillings a week, is ample enough. When he is married, his troubles begin. But, married or single, he may find encouragement in one of the conditions of his enrolment: "Every police-constable in the force may hope to rise by activity, intelligence, and good conduct to the superior stations."

The policeman's daily round of duty, it may be noted, is somewhat modified if he happens to be posted in a rural district; and a considerable tract of very genuine country is embraced within the six hundred and eighty-eight square miles which form the area of the Metropolitan Police District. In the country, day and night duty are alike of eight hours at a stretch; and there are places where the constable can only get once round his beat in the time.

We must not forget that, although the guardianship of the streets occupies the greater part of the force, yet that the police are employed in other numerous and varied duties. There is the regulation of the traffic, the service of the police-courts, where the police act as summoning officers. They attend coroners' inquests, they form a cordon about fires, of which they generally give the first effective alarm. Policemen distribute and collect the voting papers for elections of guardians. Is there a meeting of any kind about rates, taxes, or local affairs, you will find a policeman good-humouredly marshalling the crowd. At races, at fêtes, at all kinds of outside shows, at public solemnities and processions, what would become of our purses, nay, of the very coats and gowns on our backs, if the police were to fail to put in an appearance? How should we pass safely through the whirl of traffic at the crowded crossings but for the stalwart arm of the policeman, who clears a way for us through the waves and billows of horses and vehicles? And if, failing his care, we are knocked down and run over, who picks us up but the policeman, and carries us away to the hospital, and communicates with our wondering friends?

And in how many other ways is not the policeman active? The police, for instance, have the inspection of nearly a thousand common lodging-houses containing a floating population of thirty thousand souls. Public carriages are licensed and inspected; in all, some fourteen thousand vehicles. The cabs of London, standing in close order as upon a cab-rank, would form a line some forty-five miles in

length—while the cab-stands, where they should remain when unemployed, would stretch for about twenty-three miles. During the year 1887, over fifteen hundred new vehicles were inspected, licensed, and brought into use. Drivers and conductors of public vehicles are also under the control of the police, and form an army of upwards of twenty-seven thousand men, all of whom pass under notice as their licenses are granted, or renewed. Then there are the chimneys also to be watched, and offenders who make too much smoke to be pounced upon. The lost property left in cabs and public vehicles forms, too, a distinct department in Scotland Yard; and, as evidence of the carelessness of the public and the honesty of drivers of cabs and conductors of omnibuses, it may be noted that more than twenty thousand articles of various kinds—from spectacle-cases to diamond necklaces—were deposited at Scotland Yard during the past year, and that the drivers and conductors who deposited the property were rewarded with close upon two thousand pounds, which was paid over by twelve thousand careless and fortunate owners.

Nor is it merely perfunctory service that we get from our police. The roll of honour, each year, records meritorious services rendered, all in course of duty, but beyond anything that a mere obligatory routine could exact. Here are rescues from drowning; lives saved from fire; runaway horses stopped at the risk of life and limb; mad or savage dogs captured, or destroyed; armed desperadoes seized and detained; all the heroisms of civil life are here displayed, and rewarded by an approving sentence from the Commissioner, or a few gracious words from Judge or Magistrate. Now and then some exceptional case of heroism reaches the public ear and arouses public sympathy, as when Police-constable Barker, at Finchley, detected and pursued two desperate ruffians, who were trying to break into a dwelling-house, following the men, till they finally beat him senseless and left him upon the railway line, where his leg was severed by a passing train. Barker got promotion and a pension, and seven hundred pounds contributed by a grateful public; and it is satisfactory to learn that he has regained his health after long suffering, and is able to follow a light employment. Many other instances of courage and devotion will occur to the mind as having occurred within recent years, some of which might

well have been decorated with the cross "for valour."

Another sympathetic function of the police—before casually alluded to—is the care of persons injured in the streets, or rendered helpless by sudden illness. And here it is satisfactory to find that instruction in ambulance duties is now part of the course of training for candidates, that is to say, recruits on joining the Force. The instructors are the police surgeons, in a series of lectures, which are followed by practical demonstrations in all those services to the sufferers which are known as "first aid."

And when we learn that during a single year as many as four thousand five hundred street accidents are reported by the police within the metropolitan area, and that five thousand five hundred persons were taken to hospital by the police during the same period, and that many lives have no doubt been saved by the readiness and skill of the police-constable who has come to their aid, we may judge of the importance of the services thus rendered to the public.

THE GERMAN EMPEROR'S STUDENT DAYS.

THE "fire-eating" speeches, the restless energy, rapid movements, and distant journeys of the new Emperor William have only shown as yet his outside character, but very little of his private manners or of his settled policy. He is still an unknown quantity in the calculations of Europe; we cannot reckon on the unknown, or trust in the untried. Hence, perhaps, arise the fears with which he sometimes is regarded. But in his character I see no causes for misgivings, and I have watched him from a boy. During his school career he was a model of the studious German youth. He took his place as a common pupil in the public school at Cassel, and played and studied with the other scholars. At the final examination he was, indeed, only tenth on the list; but then he was two years younger than his mates, and was rightly considered to have done so well, that his tutor was immediately knighted. There is no cramming system in Germany; he passed without aid or favour.

At the University of Bonn I have sat on the same benches with him, and seen him, with his little note-book, writing down,

like a hard-worked reporter, nearly all the Professor uttered in his lectures on the great German authors, or on the genius of our own Shakespeare. The Prince was anxious also to study subjects not just then in the curriculum, and for these the Professors attended at his rooms. Day by day I have seen him riding out in the afternoon for exercise, dressed in his stiff military cap, and long boots, and simple blue jacket, as Hussar, and nodding courteously to all who greeted him. Day by day I have been with him in the swimming-baths in the Rhine, and seen him plunging off the spring-board with his cousin, the Prince of Meiningen, who accompanied him as adjutant. They would both spring fearlessly, headforemost, from the highest point of the board, and plunge, and dive, and swim with great dexterity, sometimes swimming under the water the whole length of the bath; sometimes watching others plunge or dive for things thrown in. I remember them joining in the half-pitying laugh which arose when an American (an ex-President's son) who had brought an umbrella to the baths, and was whirling it round and round, let it slip into the Rhine! Many were glad of the mishap, and dived in glee to seek this new Nibelungen treasure. Even Prince William and his friends made some attempts; but all in vain. I fortunately had come fresh to the baths, and, diving, groped for the umbrella along the ground, for the dun waters of the Rhine exclude the light, till, exhausted, I had to emerge without the "gamp." I had dived, perhaps, with an air of confidence, and I now perceived a grin of ridicule and disappointment in the bathers when my hands were seen without the "find." But, in rising, still groping with my feet, I caught the leviathan between my toes, and I remember the cheer of Princes and all as I held it aloft in the water and opened it out to the sun.

Meiningen usually sprang immediately after the Prince, whom he had to protect from a crowd of irrepressible bathers, mostly English schoolboys, who kept hovering round the baths like long, bare-legged, shivering cranes, waiting, half-maliciously, for an opportunity to spring upon him in the stream. I have seen groups of these English fellows purposely plunge pell-mell after the Princes, sometimes lighting on their heads in the water, and splashing them with the spray.

Indeed, on one occasion I actually found myself unwittingly thus jumping on the head of the present Emperor, and was thrown on my back in the water by his rising up between my feet. But the English boys took a special delight in pestering the Prince, not only in the baths, but in boating, on the promenade, and about the University and town. It is said that William does not like the English; and, indeed, it is not surprising.

Yet Prince William never showed any irritation at all this annoyance, which could certainly have been punished. He remained placid and indifferent to their personal insults, and, in the end, he outwearied his tormentors, and, by his continued gentleness, he actually won their hearts and turned them into admirers.

By the Professors, however, the Prince was treated with an almost servile adulation, and he won their esteem and love. He had them all in turn to dinner at his rooms in a villa which overhung the Rhine, with the honeysuckle, clematis, and Virginia-creepers reaching over and down the garden walls almost to the water's edge.

The Queen sent him out from England a splendid boat, costing nearly two hundred pounds; but he used it very little, and it generally lay moored by the bank beneath his garden, idly rocking in the ripple of the Rhine.

But he took part heartily in all the amusements common among German students, namely beer-drinking, duelling, torch-light processions, carriage-driving, bathing, and in winter, sledging. I do not think he ever fought a real duel; but he mingled freely with the duellers, and in Kneipen (drinking bouts), and torch-light serenades, sipping and sitting with the sippers of light German beer till late into the night.

In 1878, the sixtieth anniversary of the University of Bonn occurred. The anniversary of everything, the birthday of everybody, is made the occasion of a feast or holiday in Germany. A drinking bout, a torch-light serenade, or a driving round the town, are their usual manifestations. And at Bonn this day was celebrated with a royal pomp, in which the present Emperor took part. At dusk a thousand students met outside the town, and fell into marching order four abreast. In front of the procession rode five heralds, girt with sword and helmet, and dressed in gorgeous array: top boots, white trousers, velvet coats, large velvet caps

with tall white feathers. These opened a way through the people-packed streets; then came eight nobles with an emblazoned banner; and then the President of the Nobles' Corps, in a carriage with four white, prancing steeds, with mounted escorts behind, and right and left of his carriage. The students in the Nobles' Corps then marched four deep behind their President, each with his flaming torch. Foremost of these was the present Emperor, and by his side were his cousins, the Duke of Baden, the Prince of Meiningen, and the Duke of Oldenburg. All the students then came on in order of their corps, whilst those unattached to any corps took rank with their faculty — Theology, Medicine, Law, or Arts. Before each corps and faculty rode its representative and escorts, with gaudy banners and multi-coloured uniforms and horses caparisoned as if for Eastern Kings.

This long procession of a thousand torches, with five bands of music, wound slowly through the streets to the house of the University Rector, which they rapidly surrounded, raising the while a threefold hurrah. The Rector came to the balcony and made a speech in clear, ringing tones, which fell out on the dim sea of human faces glimmering in the torch-light glare and hushed and silent as the night. The scene was indeed impressive, and not easily forgotten. All classes of the citizens were present there, and students from every province, the Imperial Prince, the proud aristocrats, the poorest students and city porters, all listening with suppressed enthusiasm to their intellectual head, who spoke the very spirit of the scene — for he rightly emphasized their common love of Emperor and Fatherland, and the unanimity of all to make and keep their country good and great. Suddenly around the Rector's house arose a many coloured fleecy glow of Bengal lights, while all the throng commenced to sing the National Hymn. The procession then marched back through the town, and, in accordance with ancient custom, surrounded the market-place in a single blazing line of torches. The centre of the square was cleared, and the command passed to all the students to meet in the Beethoven Hall in twenty minutes; then, at a given signal, Prince William hurled his torch high into the air, and, making a graceful curve, it fell right in the centre of the square. Then each student, grasping his flaming brand with both his hands, about a yard apart,

shot it up with all his might, and for some minutes the midnight air was filled with darting fires, while a thousand voices sang the well-known students' Latin song, "Gaudeamus igitur." The street arabs were, meanwhile, rushing in to seize the brands for fire-wood; but the policemen, ready with the hose, extinguished the torches. Great excitement and roars of laughter, however, were caused whenever an urchin tried to steal a torch, by the water-jet coming down full force, obliterating thief and theft at a shot. Time after time a rush was made for the brands, but from every side the irresistible water-column shot instantly along, sweeping the pavement and driving the assailants to bay. I was beside the Prince and his companion throughout the scene, and nobody enjoyed it better than he. His face, like that of us all, was begrimed and black with the pitch and smoke, and all our clothes and the regulation "white gloves" were stained with resin and tar. William always entered with great zest into such games and practical jokes, and laughed heartily at the fun.

In less than half-an-hour all the students had washed and dressed and met in the Beethoven Hall, which was crowded to the door; the gallery being reserved for ladies. The Professors and Princes occupied the platform, and a hundred waiters ran hither and thither, serving the long table, with their steaming trays laden with amber-flowing beer, or with beef, bread, sauerkraut, and mustard to supply the hungry men. Songs and speeches followed. Several of the Professors, the Prince, and the Presidents of corps, poured out their orations of loyalty to Kaiser, and country, and to the founders of the Royal University of Bonn. The drinking lasted till day-break. Seven thousand two hundred glasses of beer were consumed that night in the Hall alone!

MEMORY.

PAST the old gateway of the childhood's home,
Down the steep path the childish footsteps trod,
Past the pale snowdrops on the mother's tomb,
Through the old portal of the House of God;
The Easter sunlight glittering fair and brave,
Through panes that glow, the father's name to
shrine,
Flinging bright colours on the columned nave,
Where brother steps made echo once to mine;
Standing, alone, beside the altar rail,
Where we two knelt to breathe our marriage vow,
Where the carved tablet near it tells the tale
Of where that glad young bridegroom slumbers
now;
And still, through Grief and Memory, Love and
Loss,
I heard the wild waves breaking by His Cross.

A TRIP IN A TRAWLER.

To give my readers some idea how fish are caught; how the trawlers live; what they do and what they endure, I am going to take them with me for a trip in a Ramegate trawler, and sail away into the wild North Sea.

It was once observed by an ancient or a modern philosopher, it matters not which, that when people went to Rome they should do as the Romans do. Adapting this apothegm to the present case, I concluded that, as I was going among trawlers, it would be wise to adopt the costume and do as the trawlers did. Behold me, then, arrayed in the picturesque but rather cumbersome costume of a smacksmen, consisting of a waterproof suit; a pair of fear-naught trousers; a rough pea-jacket; a pair of sea-boots; some warm woollen stockings, commonly called fleecy hosiery; and other sundries.

It was about eight o'clock on a fine morning, about the middle of December, that I found myself on board the "John and Nicholas," fifty-three tons register, and numbered, let us say, R 436. I had shipped as an extra hand, without share or pay; but with permission to contribute my share towards the ordinary expenses of the craft. There was some difficulty about the latter part of the arrangement, both the skipper and the men raising strong objections to taking anything in the shape of remuneration. One of the men said, as I was going to work, "I didn't ought to pay nauthin' for my grub;" and the skipper said, "if I liked to goo, I could goo, and welcome; but he didn't want me to pay nauthin' for it."

But I refused to budge from my first stipulation, and sooner than disappoint me, they at length withdrew their objection, and allowed me to do as I proposed. To enable me to don my nautical attire, I was introduced into the cabin, an apartment about sixteen feet long and six feet wide, narrowing off towards the stern. There was a stove for warmth and cooking, and on either side were four bunks, or sleeping places, and beneath were lockers, forming seats. I commenced my operations by divesting myself of my shore-going toggery, with the exception of my underclothing, and then encased my lower spars in a pair of fleecy hosiery stockings; over

these came the fear-naught trousers, and over these again a pair of stockings of the rib-and-furrow description. And then I commenced to defend my hull from cold and wet by a flannel shirt, a stout blue jersey, and a pea-jacket. My attire was completed by drawing on a pair of well-greased boots, reaching considerably above my knees, and finally I donned a yellow sou'-wester of the true trawler type. When I was fully attired I made my appearance on deck, and stated my intention of lending a hand; whereupon Bill, the cook-boy, began to snigger. But when I commenced to coil away the ropes, and put things straight, he opened his eyes and confided to the fourth hand the fact that he was "jiggered" if he didn't think I should turn out to be a sell.

It was close upon high water when we hauled up to the gates, and, as the wind was about west-south-west, and blew almost directly into the harbour's mouth, we were taken in tow by the harbour tug "Aid," and, when clear of the harbour, we set our jib and foresail, cast off the tow-rope, and sped on our course through the Old Cudd Channel.

The day was fresh and clear; there was a spanking breeze, and the little hooker went bounding over the seas like a lapwing. To me, after a long spell ashore, there was something exhilarating in finding myself once more on the broad ocean, with a tight little craft under me, and the blue sky above my head. The water foamed under her bows, and hissed under her quarters, as the "John and Nicholas" rose and fell on the following seas, speeding on past Broadstairs and the North Foreland out into the open sea. The breeze freshened as we drew out from the land. There was now as much wind as the gallant little craft could stagger on under; but the skipper was evidently not fond of reefing, for he still carried on, notwithstanding that the lee-scuppers were considerably under water.

And now let me pause to give a slight sketch of the skipper and his crew. In fisherman's parlance a crew consists of a skipper, or first hand; a mate, or second hand; third and fourth hands; and a boy, who acts as cook. Simon Redwood, our skipper, was a round-faced little man, with a rather irritable cast of countenance, which was by no means a true index to his character, for, as I afterwards discovered, he was as kind-hearted a man as ever breathed; and no man out of the port of

Ramagate was more respected by his owners or liked by his crew.

The second hand was also a remarkable man. He was a tall, rather ungainly fellow, with a short body and very long legs, a florid complexion, and very sandy hair, and was known to his companions as "Ginger-top," or "Billy Longshanks." But though he was no beauty, he was as brave as a lion, and had been presented by the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society with a silver medal and two pounds for saving life at sea. The rest of the crew were of the ordinary type — strong, hardy, and brave.

Trawlers work in shares, of which there are eight. The skipper takes a share and three-eighths, the second, third, and fourth hands take each a share and one-eighth, and the owner takes the rest. The cook-boy is usually an apprentice, and takes no share, but is clothed and fed, and has, when on shore, a shilling a day spending money.

Shortly before sunset we arrived on the fishing ground, and preparations were now being made to shoot the trawl and commence operations. As the day waned, the breeze had fallen, and the night, though fresh and cold, was a beautiful one. As the sun touched the horizon, the sky was suffused with tints of the softest and most beautiful colours, while a host of prismatic clouds, gorgeously tinted, rose up, as it were, to escort the departing luminary to the verge of the horizon, where they left him to pursue his journey to the far west.

Thus far, the aspect of a trawler's life was rather an enviable one. There was plenty of good food, and by no means an inordinate quantity of work; but I was presently to see the business in a different aspect. The only drawback was that there was no opportunity of stretching one's legs, and I fully realised the truth of the old adage, that a fisherman's walk is two steps and overboard. But the situation was of my own choosing, and so what could not be cured had to be endured. One thing soon became evident, and that was, that if my trip did not prove an agreeable one, it would be the fault of the weather, and not of my companions, for a kinder, more civil lot of fellows I never met with.

Before we proceed to shoot the trawl I must give some description of it. It is a curious and rather complicated apparatus, but specially well adapted for the purpose for which it is used. The net is shaped like a pocket, and is from sixty to eighty feet long, tapering off to a point called the

cod-end. It is open at the mouth from thirty to forty feet, by three deep. The upper part is stretched across a large beam or spar, thirty or forty feet long as the case may be, with two large iron heads, somewhat of an oval shape, weighing between three and four hundred pounds, and causing the trawl to sink to the bottom, or rather to within three feet of it. To the lower half of the net is attached a thick ground rope, which is parcelled and served, and protects the net from the friction of the ground. The open space between the beam and the ground rope forms a trap, which, when the fish have entered, if the trawler is up to his work, they cannot escape. The trawl is dragged along the ground by a rope or warp, attached by two bridles to the trawl beam, about sixty or seventy fathoms long, and travels with the tide, as fish all swim against it. On the ability of the fisherman depend not only the quantity but also the quality of the fish caught. If he sails too slowly the fish are likely to escape or avoid the net; if too fast, everything is swept on the cod-end and the fish are damaged or smothered.

All being clear for shooting, the net was thrown overboard. The beam was swung round square with the stern, the warp paid out gradually, and the fishing commenced. Meantime the side lights were extinguished, and a white light was hoisted at the mast-head. As the trawl was not to be hauled till the morning, there was nothing more to do but to get our suppers and turn in. When the trawl is down the vessel requires no steering, but one hand remains on deck to keep a look-out. The watches are from six to twelve, and from that time to five or six in the morning, according to time, the trawl is hauled. The skipper and the cook keep no night-watches. As I was not to keep any watch, and as the cabin was hot and stuffy, I drank my grog and went on deck to smoke my pipe. Ginger-top had the watch, and as I found him an intelligent fellow I soon drew him on to a yarn.

"Lots o' smacks have been lost? Of course they have, sir. How can it be otherways? The chaps as sail in these timber ships never keeps no sort of a look-out. The best part of the night there's nobody awake but the man at the wheel, and they go blunderin' on and smashes into a fisherman, and never stops to see what's done or to pick up the drowning crew. You see, a smack, when she's got her trawl down, is perfectly helpless—she can't get out o' the way. You may hail as much as

you like, but they're into you before you can say Jack Robinson, and then it's a bad look-out for the fisherman. When I was a young feller I had a narrow escape. I'd shipped aboard a smack sailing out o' Grimaby. One night it was my watch; there was a fresh breeze and the night was dark. I was leaning against the pump, smoking. All of a sudden I thought I heard a noise coming from windward; but I could see nothing. I felt sure it was the buzzing and roaring of water under a ship's bows, and I put my head down the hatch and gave 'em a call. At the moment when I lifted my head a great lump of a brig, without the ghost of a bit o' light, came tearing along straight for us. I hailed and shouted, and the other hands shouted too; but the great brute slapped right into us. As she came rasping down upon us, I laid hold of her bob-stay, and clung on like grim death. There was two or three shrieks, and a tearing and rending of planks, and all was over, and the 'Flashing Spray' went down with all hands but me."

"Didn't they heave-to and get out a boat?"

"Not they! They never touched tack in sheet, but sailed on as if nothing had happened. I swung myself up, and laid hold of her martingale, and a minute or two afterwards over the top-gallant fore-castle and on to the deck. I begged and prayed of 'em to heave-to and get out a boat; but instead, they laid hold of me and tried to pitch me overboard; and they would, too, if the mate hadn't come to my rescue. But though he spoke pretty good English, and understood all I said, they wouldn't start tack or sheet, and my poor mates was all drowned, without anybody trying to save 'em."

"And what was the end of it all?" I asked.

"Nothing at all, sir. They treated me fairly well, and landed me at a place called Colberg. There was a good deal of talking, and I was took afore a court; but I couldn't understand a word o' their lingo."

"But was there not any one who understood English?"

"There was a chap as they called a interpreter, and I told him my story; and what he said to the gentlemen I couldn't tell. All I know is that I was told it was all right, and that I was to be sent home in a ship loaded with salt, which was to sail in a few days. I was landed at Hull, and went to the Custom House and told

my story, and it was all taken down in writin'; but as far as I knows of, nothing was ever done. But supposing there was, they couldn't bring back the poor fellows as was drowned, and all because those blessed Norwegians don't keep a look-cut as they ought to do."

"It's very sad; but surely this must be an exceptional case?"

"Exceptionable! not a bit of it, sir. There's lots o' smacks as go to sea and is never heard of arterwards. Where do they go to? Why, lots o' 'em's run down, and nobody's left to tell the tale of what became of 'em."

This was a pleasant story to be told just as I was going to turn in. Fancy, in the midst of a pleasant dream, being suddenly awakened by a crash, the sea coming pouring down the hatch, the fight with the water, and the ghastly agony of such a death! No doubt this was a disagreeable fantasy to go to sleep upon, and it was some time before I closed my eyes in slumber; but when I did, I slept like a top.

At five o'clock I was roused from my slumbers by a "tapping at my chamber door," and I jumped out of my berth and stood upon the cabin floor. In other words, the crew were ordered to turn out and heave the trawl up, and, as I had shipped as a working hand, I felt bound to turn out with the rest.

It was many a long day since I had seen the day break at sea, and I rather anticipated a pleasant and picturesque sight; but when I got on deck, the aspect of things was neither picturesque nor pleasant. It was blowing half a gale of wind, and the appearance of the sea and sky was wild and stormy. The first faint streaks of dawn were lighting the eastern horizon, throwing a weak, imperfect light on the angry sea. To windward there was a bank of black clouds, and masses of heavy scud flying overhead; but in the east there was a bit of clear-cut horizon separating sea and sky. There had been a heavy downpour of rain half an hour previously, and everything was wet and sloppy.

The warp had been taken to the capstan, and the men were slowly heaving up the trawl—a long and toilsome operation. When the beam was raised to the level of the bulwarks, it was made fast, and the net hauled inboard, and the cod-end, which is securely tied with a piece of rope, was cast loose, and the fish came tumbling

out on the deck. There seemed a great mass of them, but the skipper's opinion was that it was by no means a good haul. There was a considerable variety—soles, whiting, plaice, haddock, and cod-fish—besides a quantity of star and jelly-fish, which, with other rubbish, was pitched overboard. As soon as the trawl was got up, the cook went below to get the breakfast ready, and the rest commenced to sort and gut the fish.

Meantime the daylight had been increasing, and after a while, in the east, there came a flush of crimson which deepened as the sun approached the verge of the horizon. Then, with a bound, the great luminary, like a fiery ball, rose out of the sea, and lit up the waves with broad dashes of molten gold.

When the fish had been sorted and gutted they were washed and placed in trunks, and put below to drain previous to being iced and placed in pounds made on purpose. All these operations, on a cold December morning, with the temperature almost down to freezing-point, were not of the most agreeable description; but the men made light of them, saying they were nothing when you were used to them.

By this time breakfast was ready, and I found a cup of hot coffee, plentifully flavoured with chicory, and some fried fish, very acceptable. The change of temperature from the piercing cold of the deck to the roasting heat of the cabin, though at first pleasant enough, soon began to be disagreeable. No doubt my olfactory nerves are more fastidious than those of a North Sea trawler, but, at any rate, an atmosphere highly charged with the fumes of strong shag tobacco, coffee, and fried fish, combined with an occasional puff of smoke from the fire, is not altogether salubrious. "Use is second nature," but I am afraid it would take a long time to reconcile me to such a conglomeration of odours. It must not be imagined that I am charging the skipper and crew of the "John and Nicholas" with any want of cleanliness. On the contrary, everything on board, especially the cabin, was scrupulously clean, and the men were not wanting in personal purification. But when you have to eat, and sleep, and cook in an apartment, at the widest part only six feet, and about sixteen feet long, it is not a matter of surprise that the atmosphere was not of the purest.

When I got on deck the weather had not improved; the sky was hard and

black, and the distant horizon indistinct and misty. Now and again, as we rose on the crest of a wave, we could catch a glimpse of othersmacks, or of a more distant ship, pitching and lurching in a way which gave us some idea of what would be our situation if we were compelled to luff to the wind, which we should have to do if Simon decided not to shoot the net.

"Well, Simon," I said, when the old skipper came on deck, "what do you think of the weather?"

"Don't like the look o' it at all, sir. We shall have a anorter before sundown."

"Then I suppose you won't shoot the trawl again to-day?"

"No, sir; if I did, it's most likely I should never see it again. No, sir, no; no shootin' o' trawls to-day. If the wind gets up more, I shall reef down and heave-to."

As the morning progressed, the wind increased and drew more to the northward, and sail was shortened till we were under close-reefed mainsail and foresail. This would have been heaving-to, had not the skipper kept her off the wind a little, in order to force her through the water. The great danger in keeping her off the wind was that of seas coming on board; but as yet the sea was not sufficiently rough to make this hazardous, and, as the little craft was light and buoyant, the chance of having the deck swept was remote, and so the day passed.

All night long it blew great guns, with frequent squalls of hail and snow; but at sunrise it was clear and bright, but piercingly cold. In my time I had seen some bad weather on the Banks of Newfoundland, but this gale in the North Sea beat it. The hail and sleet were worse than anything I had previously seen; it cut the skin, and made it bleed, and it was with difficulty that we could keep up the circulation; and the sails and gear were covered with snow and sleet. As the day progressed, the gale increased in violence, and as night approached a wild scene lay around us. The sea resembled a chaos of waters; the portions of the rolling seas that were not white with foam looked green and angry; the clouds, great masses of driving scud, now and again hid the sinking sun, and the gale seemed fast coming to its height.

And now came an incident that touched me more than anything I had ever previously witnessed. As we rose on the top of a huge billow, a large brig, which was lying-

to about a mile to leeward, rose with us. She had all along been making very bad weather of it, and several times we had seen heavy seas sweep her deck in a manner that was highly dangerous. Now, suddenly, she gave a great plunge, and disappeared altogether. As I saw the wave roll over her, I uttered a cry. The skipper, with the true instincts of a seaman, ordered the helm to be put up, eased off the mainsheet, and ran down to leeward in the hope of picking up some of the crew. But though within ten minutes of her sinking, we passed over the very spot where she disappeared, not a trace of her or her crew could be seen. As to the cause of this awful catastrophe, we could not even guess at it.

The sun went down in a misty haze, and night once more closed around us. It was pitch-dark, and but for the side-lights we could not have seen an inch beyond our noses. It was an anxious and a dreadful night; the wind howled and shrieked so loudly, and the sea was lashed into such indescribable fury, that the thought of turning in and going to sleep was out of the question. The snow and alest were descending in blinding masses, and the temperature was considerably below freezing-point, but still most of us kept the deck, only going below occasionally to get our blood thawed by a warm at the fire. So the dreary hours passed. Everything was closely battened down, for, though the little craft rose like a duck over the billows, every now and again she shipped a heavy sea which almost swamped her, drenching all hands to the skin, and flooding the deck right aft to the taffrail.

When daylight broke, the prospect was by no means a cheering one. The whole face of the ocean was one mass of tossing water, and the heavens were black with clouds. There was no sign of the gale abating. The men's faces were blue and pinched, and though I had on thick mittens, my fingers were almost frozen with the cold. The keen, northerly air produced a corresponding effect on our appetites, and the cook-boy, who had slept through all the turmoil of the night, was roused out to get the kettle to boil and make some coffee. Good, hot coffee will put life into a man on the coldest day that ever came out of the heavens—it is better than all the rum and whiskey that was ever distilled, and we found it so. The breakfast was not of a very *recherché* description, but I never enjoyed a meal more in my life.

Throughout the morning the gale continued, with occasional storms of hail, snow, and alest; but towards noon the sky began to break and the gale to moderate.

"Well," I said to the skipper, "you said we were going to have a snorter, and you were quite right; but I think we've seen the worst of it."

"Yes, sir; but don't make sure as we've seen the last of it. We shall have another puff before we're done with it."

And the skipper was right. Just before sundown a huge mist, capped with black clouds, came driving towards us, extending over the whole of the eastern part of the horizon, while the sun was shining brightly in the opposite part of the heavens. It came upon us at once as with a blast and a shower of hail and rain, which almost took our breath away, and forced the hardiest of the crew to turn his back to it. The little craft paid off from the wind and ran on for some time before it, tearing through the water like a racehorse. It was the last dying effort, and by nine o'clock the wind moderated, the sky began to clear to windward, and before midnight the moon was shining on an almost placid sea. I slept soundly all through that night, and when I awoke the wind had dropped, and it was almost calm.

It was Sunday morning, and Sunday on board the "John and Nicholas" was a day of rest. A good many trawlers pay no attention to Sunday at sea; but my old skipper said:

"Nobody never got nauthin' by trawling on a Sunday."

We had a quiet and happy day, though no bells were tolling; though we did not array ourselves in purple and fine linen, and there was no church to go to; yet the blue sky above and the peaceful ocean beneath formed one great temple, where "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth His handiwork." The men seemed to think that cleanliness was not only next to, but before godliness, so that all had a good clean and made everything shipshape, and then sat down to read their Bibles. In the afternoon I read them the Litany, and after that the men smoked their pipes and sang some hymns. The shades of evening closed upon us; the sun sank in the west; the soft rose tints faded into grey, and night and silence fell upon us.

For three more days we prosecuted our fishing with very good success, and then,

as the wind was still easterly, we made sail for Ramsgate. It does not follow that because a smack hails from a port, she always returns to it to sell her fish. Ramsgate smacks, as often as not, land the fish at Lowestoft or Ostend, according to the direction in which the wind blows.

But we were not destined to reach our port as soon as we expected, for the wind dropped and a thick fog came on, and we lay for some hours with her head boxing about all round the compass. Towards night a moderate breeze sprang up; the fog, however, continued as thick as ever, and we could not see the vessel's length before us. The fog-horn was sounded continually. This state of things continued through the night, with a light air from the westward, literally feeling our way along. But the skipper kept the lead going and was well satisfied as to the course he was taking. Just before daylight an incident happened which might have cut short our trip. Suddenly the look-out forward sang out in a tone that showed there was no time to be lost: "Hard up! Hard up!" and the next instant a great ship loomed up out of the fog, coming directly down upon us. She luffed at the same moment, and when we passed one another you could have thrown a biscuit on board of her. If the look-out had not sung out the instant he did, the "John and Nicholas" would have been reported missing, and this paper would not have been written. Half an hour after this we made the Galloper Light, the wind increased, the fog dispersed, and before twelve o'clock we were safe in Ramsgate harbour.

Let no one imagine that I have exaggerated, or that the weather we experienced is at all exceptional in the North Sea. On the contrary, I am told that, with the exception of the gale, the weather, for the time of year, was remarkably fine. Ramsgate never looked so inviting as it did as I landed on the cross wall on that particular December day, and certainly I never knew the luxury of a good smart walk till I had been cooped up for nine days in a Ramsgate trawler, where peregrination was an impossibility.

If I have interested the reader in the occupation of a body of men, of whose common life I have attempted to give a rather feeble sketch, I shall be satisfied. Trawlers are not men of culture or education, but they are manly, generous, and brave, and well skilled in their craft. Of the succour they have rendered to ships in

distress, and the crews they have rescued from a watery grave, I will say nothing now, except that there are many men living who have reason to bless, and, as long as they live, will never forget, the gallantry and daring of our North Sea smacksmen.

THE MATES OF JACKASS GULLY.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

It was so very usual for the ordinary routine of the camp at Jackass Gully to be disturbed by the sudden outburst of tumult and strife, that it was barely considered among the miners as cause enough for immediate cessation of labour.

In fact, in the undeviating philosophy of the Victorian mining camp, fighting was regarded as such an undoubted prerogative of sentient humanity, that any eccentric member of the community who did not fight was considered to be wanting in one of the finest attributes of humanity.

But when the celebrated fight between Ballarat Joe and "Poggy" Scott took place, Jackass Gully threw off for the time being its usual apathy, and rushed by unanimous accord to participate in the novel sight afforded by those two friends and companions lustily hammering away at one another. For the two men had been "mates" ever since Jackass Gully, two years back, had been evolved from the primitive bush.

Indeed, in the mining camp the friendship existing between Ballarat Joe and "Poggy" Scott had been regarded as quite idyllic, and though neither the one nor the other of the two friends could be fairly said to have anything poetic about him, the unique fact of their having worked together for a period of two years without having come to blows, was quite sufficient to fix them on the horizon of Jackass Gully as stars of no mean magnitude.

The cause of the quarrel between the two friends—and alas! of the fight that subsequently ensued—was found to be, on enquiry, of such a ridiculous nature as to lend a certain sense of humour to the proceedings. Bearing out the truth of an old adage, it transpired that a woman was the main cause of the trouble.

Ballarat—as he was more colloquially called—was known throughout the Camp as a misogynist of the deepest dye. At the mere mention of the gentler sex he would exhibit signs of impatience and

anger, and growl anathemas against all womankind. Current opinion in Jackass Gully hinted that his experience of the sex had been anything but pleasant, a theory which certain hints he let drop, from time to time, seemed to corroborate.

But "Poggy" Scott—why "Poggy" no one knew.—younger than his mate by several years, held no such pessimist views, and not regarding the connection with eyes of saddened experience as did Ballarat, was wont to find a certain charm in the contemplation and society of such of the gentler sex as had found their way to the seclusion of Jackass Gully.

These youthful proclivities of his mate had long been viewed with much disfavour by the misogynistic Ballarat, and the fact of his partner's showing something more than a passing fancy for the bold-faced barmaid of the "Melbourne Arms" served to stir into active life his slumbering anger.

With that directness of action and address which characterises colonial digging humanity, the outraged Ballarat took early occasion to remonstrate with "Poggy."

His denunciation took a form energetic if not elegant.

"Look you here. This 'ere fandanderin' round won't suit me," he growled, bringing his fist down on the rude table at which they sat. "He ain't no mate of mine as goes messin' round with a lot of wimmen. Them's things as you and me have got to leave alone. Darn all petticutts, say I. The man as chooses them has got to leave me, mate or no mate. So I tell you, once and for all, slide up on that there game, or you and me's got to part. Why; you'll be wanting to bring that there girl here next, darn my hide if you won't"—and in just indignation and scorn the speaker lost the thread of his discourse in a torrent of vituperation.

It was somewhat unfortunate for the effect of Ballarat's denunciation, that the two men had been drinking heavily during the evening. It was unfortunate, because Poggy, instead of receiving his friend's admonition with his customary meekness, answered in a spirit not calculated to soothe his companion's anger. Hot words ensued, and hotter recrimination, and before five minutes had elapsed the two men, amicable companions for so long, were locked together in a desperate struggle.

The immediate result of the rupture between the two friends was a total separation, and, after the fight, Poggy

turned out of the hut the two had shared in common, and furthermore, to mark the event, pegged out a new claim.

It may be imagined at a superficial glance that the auburn-bearded worthy was exhibiting a certain amount of self-sacrifice in this depriving himself of a half share in the claim which they were working together. But this was not exactly the case, as the claim up to the time of the memorable fight had not proved a payable one, and was looked upon by both as anything but an El Dorado. However, be that as it may, Poggy pegged out afresh a claim that had been abandoned, and in point of fact separated himself entirely from his former companion.

His predilection for the massive Abigail, who had been the immediate cause of the rupture, received shortly afterwards an untimely blow, for that damsel one morning was found to have absconded during the night with a kindred masculine spirit, in company with two of the camp-horses and the contents of the public-house till.

Whether it was this unexpected dénouement, whether it was that his feelings had been really interested in the enterprising barmaid, or whether it was that he regretted his recent rupture with his former ally, it was noticed throughout the camp that Poggy went about his daily work in a spirit of sadness and depression, and showed every sign of what in early Australian mining phraseology was known as "being under the mullock."

CHAPTER II.

THINGS were in this state, and Jackass Gully was each day looking forward with anticipation for further developments in connection with the two quondam friends, when an event occurred which for the time absorbed the interest of the whole camp.

That unfortunate young miner, Poggy Smith, whilst at work one morning, using his pick with youthful vigour, met with a dire accident. The point of the pick, striking against a buried piece of ironstone, glanced off and entered the fleshy part of his leg, severing one of the large arteries. It was unfortunate for the young man that he did not at first fully comprehend the serious nature of the wound, and that he foolishly tried to make his way to his hut without first endeavouring to stop the flow of blood, for before he had gone many paces he fell with a dull groan, and lay helplessly bleeding, and powerless to move.

When, at last, his groans attracted

the attention of those not far distant, it was hardly noticed that the belligerent Ballarat was one of the first on the scene of the accident, and that he did a great deal—though in a half-reluctant way—to tend the injured man. It was not noticed at the time, because later on when Poggy had been carried into his new quarters, and his leg had been roughly bound up to stop the bleeding, Ballarat withdrew to his own hut, and was content to let others expend their energies in attending to the injured man.

It was Ballarat, however, who subsequently made his appearance leading a horse saddled and bridled, and rubbing his nose feebly remarked: "I thought of goin' for the doctor." It was not noticed at the time that nobody had suggested such a proceeding—that it emanated entirely from Ballarat himself; but it was a matter of some remark to the others that he put spurs to his horse, and rode off over the rough ground at a break-neck gallop that was by no means safe for horse or rider.

However, that he carried out his mission safely, events proved; for in less time than could have been expected, he was seen galloping back in company with the doctor. His duty ended thus far, he hung furtively about the hut where Poggy lay, and finally retired to his own quarters.

When it became known shortly afterwards that the injury the young man had received was not very great, public excitement calmed down; and when the doctor, after bandaging the wounded limb, left the camp to return home, the ordinary routine of work was resumed by all hands.

In fact, it was not until two days afterwards, when on the doctor's second visit, he found his patient terribly weak and exhausted through loss of blood, that the general interest was fully aroused. It was found that the bandages had become displaced, and that the wounded man had been bleeding afresh as he lay in his bunk. On the grimy amateur nurses who had attended on Poggy, the doctor turned the vials of his wrath with a directness of epithet that stooped to no evasion.

"You thick-headed lot of murderers," he exclaimed fiercely, "you'd let a man bleed to death before you'd lend a helping hand. You're killing him amongst you. Clear out, every mother's son of you; there isn't a man here I'd trust the life of a cat with."

In what manner and by what means Ballarat was subsequently established as sole nurse to his former companion, he

himself took occasion to explain somewhat sheepishly to Poggy, when that worthy in course of time recovered.

"You see," he said, carefully looking the other way and passing his hand doubtfully across his brow, as was his wont when labouring under temporary embarrassment, "you see, when the doctor was so mighty rough on the boys, and I bein' about—haphazard, so to speak—loafin' round quite unbeknowin', he says to me the doctor does, 'I wants you,' and I goes in; and he ses: 'Are you a murderer?' And I ses, 'I don't run much on that there line.' 'Then look arter this 'ere man,' ses he, and of course I had to, him sayin' so. Not as I wanted to, mind you," he explained with some vagueness, breaking off and looking straight over his companion's head, "only me loafing round, I was put there. So when the doctor ses: 'You've got to watch him, and see as he's attended to,' I ses: 'Doctor, him and me don't hit it, him being young and foolish and given to fandanderin'.' 'Are you mates?' he ses; and I ses: 'We are and we are not.' 'Then, if you are,' he ses, 'shet your mouth.' So I stays there unwillin' like; and you being so bad I had to look arter you. And when the doctor comes agen," continued Ballarat, with still more painful embarrassment, shifting his glance to the open door of the hut, "and he ses as how you was sinkin' from loss of blood, I ses—thinkin' of other things all the time—'If as how it's blood he wants, he can have some of mine.' There ain't nothing in that," he exclaimed hastily, with momentary fierceness. "Blood's pretty cheap with me; I don't think nothin' of it. Maybe I give a pint here and a pint there to anybody as asked. I've had it come from my nose," he continued reflectively, "and not thought nothing of it. So knowin' it wasn't no good to me—me having too much—I ses you can have some; and the doctor gives me a jab there," pointing to his arm, "and runs it into you. He ses: 'That'll save his life;' but I ses: 'That ain't nothing to me.' The being here unbeknowin' and having too much and wantin' to get rid of some, that's what does it. 'Cos blood's pretty cheap with me, and I don't mind spreadin' it round a bit. It does a cove good. I always feel——"

But the course of his embarrassed narrative was cut short at this point by an impetuous movement on the part of his companion.

"Old man!" said Poggy, rising from his

bunk and gripping the hands of his companion in both his, "I know what you mean. You've been looking after your old mate, that's what it is. You've been looking after me ever since that there pick drove a hole inter me. You've given your blood for me when I was that weak I couldn't have lifted a shovelful of mullock to save my life. Give us your fist, mate. I knowed you was good colour right through. I ain't much at yabberin' big, but you've done what I won't forget—"

"It was just chance like," answered Ballarat, still very much embarrassed. "It wasn't nothing as I wouldn't do for anybody, mind ye. 'Taint likely I'd do anything much for a fandanderin' cove like you, as I'd had a barney with a week afore. 'Tain't likely;" and with an assumption of great disdain he pulled a twist of tobacco from his pocket, and cutting off a large lump, thrust it into his mouth.

However, despite Ballarat's repudiation of all softer feelings in connection with the act of friendship he had extended to Poggy, the immediate result was—as might be anticipated—a complete return to their old condition of comradeship and amity. It was plain to see that it was simply a characteristic dread of ridicule that made Ballarat repudiate all finer feelings in his late course of action.

Jackass Gully, as a rule, was not inclined to sentimentalism in any shape or form whatsoever, and, indeed, was wont to regard somewhat hilariously any line of conduct not strictly practical and matter-of-fact, as demonstrating culpable weakness and want of character in the actor.

It was this, perhaps, that made Ballarat strenuously deny any ulterior motive in his act of devotion; but that his denials were superficial his subsequent conduct proved, for he continued to tend his friend, and do all the harder work of their modest household.

And so things went on for some time, until Poggy's hurt was quite healed, and he was able to resume work as usual.

CHAPTER III.

THE next development in connection with the reunited partners was of a totally unexpected character as far as they, and, in fact, the whole of the mining community of Jackass Gully, were concerned.

It took the strange form of a sudden access of good fortune.

Their joint claim, which they had worked at long and unprofitably, suddenly

turned out one of the richest on the field. Gold, that had been all along so scarce as hardly to pay for working, suddenly became plentiful, and the richness of the finds became at once the popular subject of interest and envy throughout the camp.

Under these circumstances, the tie that united the two friends seemed to become strengthened. There never had been such idyllic friendship in Jackass Gully. It was at once the admiration and surprise of the entire camp, until the accident that overtook Ballarat finally put an end to it at once and for ever.

It was the characteristic carelessness of the man that led to the misfortune which brought about the final breaking-up of this long-continued friendship. A legal formality, in regard to the lease of the claim, necessitated a visit to the nearest township by one of the owners. Ballarat was saddling his horse preparatory to making the short journey, when his pipe accidentally fell from his mouth on to the ground near his horse's hind legs. Stooping to pick it up with an unconcern born of unreasoning recklessness, he received a frightful kick from the unshod hoofs of the animal.

It was a mortal injury, and the man never recovered from it.

Poggy carried him into their hut; but even he knew that there would be no healing from so deadly a blow.

"I'm on the granite at last, mate," groaned Ballarat, pressing his companion's hand feebly as he lay supported by him. "I've panned out the last dish. There ain't no more wash-dirt in this 'ere claim."

"Don't say that. You ain't hurt so much as that," said Poggy, with an unwonted tremor in his voice.

"Ay, mate; my tally's got the last notch. There won't be no more business transacted. That there hoss has settled it this time. We were doin' very well together, too, Poggy, me and you. But you'll have to do without me now. We were good mates until you went fandanderin' round among the wimmin—though you being young, didn't know no better, o' course. I was sorry I got my back up and went for fightin'. It was a bit mean, me being the oldest; but Lor! a little blood does no harm."

"It was me, Ballarat, as did it," exclaimed Poggy brokenly.

"No, it was me, mate, as turned rusty. Maybe I was mad with you for going fandanderin' round, and maybe I had

a bit of a fancy for you, secret like. But there—it's too late for that now. Listen here, mate. I ain't goin' to stop here much longer. This 'ere old karkis has pretty nigh finished its jiggerin', and it's got to be put out of the way. Gimme a drink of water," he continued feebly; "my mouth's got fire in it, and I want to tell you something afore I croak."

What the injured man had it in his mind to impart, Poggy alone exactly knew, though subsequent developments went in a great measure to show what it in effect was. But to sympathising Jackass Gully, crowding round the doorless entrance of the hut, the low words of the injured man were inaudible.

There was something in the spectacle of Ballarat, lying in the arms of his partner and whispering feverishly in his ear, that seemed to keep the crowd—rough and unrefined as it was—at an orderly distance. There was a hush, too, among the congregated miners, and a respectful silence, only broken by the whispered enquiry of some new-comer as to the cause of the accident. That was maintained until the injured man turned in his friend's arms and said:

"Let me see the boys before I go. Maybe they might want to give me a word before it's all over. I've put up my last ante, boys," he exclaimed, with a weak attempt at pleasantry that was pathetic in its way. "The pool's scooped, and this here hand's got to pass. 'Taint nothing when you're used to it, I expect; but it's pretty hard when it comes to the finishin' bust. But I want to tell you all, so's to make you witnesses, that I give my share of the claim to Poggy here. He knows what to do with it. It's panning out rich, and gold's plentiful. I make it over to Poggy 'cos he knows what to do with it. Well, good-bye, boys; this here discoursin's gettin' pretty nigh over."

He spoke with the utmost difficulty, and stopped many times to collect his wandering ideas. But once again he aroused himself and said, "Good-bye, boys;" and then sank back exhausted. The sympathising miners waited silently with a certain newly-awakened feeling of compassion, but the injured man lay breathing heavily on his companion's shoulder. Then one of the crowd stepped up to him, and silently took his hand and shook it. Following his example the others, one by one, did the same, and then silently formed a ring round the bunk. Ballarat was

evidently not conscious of what they did, but lay gazing blankly at the bark roof, till all at once a few words broke from his lips. "Blood being cheap with me, me havin' too much of it," he muttered, "it weren't nothing but what I wouldn't do for anybody. Poggy, Poggy—" and then, with his companion's name on his lips, a rattle sounded in poor Ballarat's throat, and his injuries had found healing.

There could be no manner of doubt but that Poggy felt his partner's untimely death keenly, though he was not particularly demonstrative in his grief. In the ethics of Jackass Gully, and throughout Australian mining circles generally, demonstration was regarded with the same distrust as sentimentalism; indulgence in either was looked upon as arguing a certain want of fortitude and manliness.

If this was the cause of Poggy's outward stoicism or no, certain it is that he showed few signs of deep sorrow. When Ballarat was buried, however, he so far departed from his usual method as to indulge in a kind of extempore funeral oration, addressed to the attendant diggers who had come to assist at the ceremony. He himself had prepared the grave, and addressed the crowd spade in hand.

"He was a good mate was Ballarat," he observed, gazing reflectively at the shallow excavation; "and me and him was partners for nigh on three years. I don't ax for a better one nohow. He's gone now; and here am I left to work the claim alone. Now I put it to you, boys, when a mate like him goes and turns up, an' axes you when he's a-dying to do a thing, if ye ain't got to do it? Ballarat give his blood freely for me, and when he was a-dying he says to me: 'There's something I want you to do.' Now, lads," continued Poggy, looking somewhat troubled, "I've got to do it—that's only straight. I'm going away for a spell to do it, and so I want you to look after my claim when I'm away. I'm coming back soon as ever it's over, and I want you to see that nobody jumps the claim or gets working it. Ballarat saved my life, and I've got to do wot he axed."

Without further enlightening his interested audience, Poggy stoically proceeded to fill the grave, and when he had completed the task, shouldered his pick and shovel, and retired to his hut. Early next morning, without further parley, he quietly left the camp on horseback, and

took the track across the hills that was the sole high-road to Melbourne.

CHAPTER IV.

DURING Poggy's absence, speculation was rife in Jackass Gully as to the nature of his mission; but nothing transpired to throw any light on the subject, until, in the course of the next fortnight, he returned. During his absence, by tacit consent, his claim was not jumped, or in any way interfered with; Jackass Gully was unanimous in considering it as a sacred trust left in its hands by the absent man.

At the close of the fortnight Poggy returned, but not alone.

He drove up to the camp in a rickety spring-cart. Alongside him sat a woman, and indistinctly seen above the projecting sides of the cart were so many small heads, that the arithmetical proficiency of the entire camp was almost at a loss to arrive at a proper estimate of the number.

It was plain to those who watched the proceedings of the young man, that something extraordinary must have taken place, and further developments were awaited with suppressed anticipation. There was a prevailing opinion throughout the camp that the necessary explanation would be shortly forthcoming; and the whole community collected in front of the "Melbourne Arms" to hear the particulars.

They were not kept long in suspense, for Poggy, after carefully lifting down his charges, and seeing them safely inside the hut, made straight for the expectant crowd. The young man's face wore a somewhat grave expression; but without further preface than a "Good day, boys!" he commenced in a rather hesitating manner:

"It's Ballarat's wife and youngsters. Eleven of them there are—all sorts and sizes. They're a regular mixed lot—some of 'em male and some of 'em female. But when Ballarat says to me, when he was a-dying, 'My wife and kids must be looked after now the claim's panning out rich,' I see, naturally they must. Ballarat was pretty rough on me, boys, when I felt like wanting female society; but he says to me when dyin', 'Poggy, when I was so rough on you, I was thinking of my wife. She's been a regular load on me, and her and me not hitting it pleasant together, things haven't been quite on the square. I run away,' he says, 'and left her and the youngsters. But I want to do the

square thing by her now the claim's paying. You must look after her and the kids, Poggy,' he says. And by the 'tarnal I'm going to," exclaimed the young man, breaking off in his oration, and looking round boldly for the first time. "Ballarat giv his blood free and mate-like, and I'm going to do the right thing by them as belonged to him. 'You must be a father to them there kids,' he says, 'and see as how they're looked after.' There's eleven of them," continued Poggy, dropping his voice and speaking in a tone of mournful contemplation, "as mixed a lot as ever I see. Some no higher than my knee, and some up to my belt. Some of 'em male and some of 'em female. And the old woman, she ain't a beauty to look at, though, maybe, a good 'un to wear. That's how the cards is placed, mates. They all belonged to Ballarat, and now they belong to me. Maybe it do seem pretty rough on a man, having a family given him premiacis, and an old woman chucked in besides; but the hand is dealt, and I'm not going to shuffle the cards till it's played out."

With this parting declaration Poggy turned and re-entered his hut, and from that moment there never issued from his lips another word of explanation or comment in connection with the matter.

In the eyes of Jackass Gully the whole circumstance bore a decided humorous interpretation, and subsequently the general hilarity was in no wise diminished when it became currently known that, prior to his arrival at the camp with his miscellaneous cargo, Poggy had actually married the relict of the defunct Ballarat.

If the devotion of the act escaped notice, the humour of it in no wise did; and it was for a long time the topic of hilarious and satirical comment throughout Jackass Gully.

To Poggy himself the episode was one far removed from any sense of humour or ridicule. In his simple way he was carrying out, to the best of his intelligence, the dying behest of his partner, and if at first he would wander mournfully away in the bush by himself and mutter: "Eleven of them, all sorts and sizes, some on 'em male and some on 'em female," he would invariably brighten up and assume his usual hearty manner when he returned to his old observation: "He giv his blood free and willing to me, and I'm a-doing what he axed when he was a-dying."

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Concelt," etc.*

CHAPTER III. AN IDEAL CHILDHOOD.

ONCE I knew Miss Kate's real history I never felt quite at ease about her, and I don't think poor old Mr. Vining did either.

As for the child herself, she was the same wicked, winning little madcap as ever. The masculine element in her nature—which had led her to associate with stable-boys, and climb trees, and play cricket in tomboy fashion in the old days at Richmond—was gradually disappearing, perhaps for want of encouraging associates to applaud her "pluck."

Sir Rupert gave her free leave to go where she would at Dayrell Court, and think she took advantage of it, and soon knew every room, and every nook and corner of the park and gardens, by heart.

The weeks drifted on, and I wondered, sometimes, that master did not want to go home. Sir Rupert had long left, and was on the Continent somewhere, so Mrs. Crossley told me.

Miss Kate was very fond of reading the books in the library. Queer enough some of them were, too, and the things she'd tell me out of them were enough to make one's hair stand on end. She took it in her head, too, that she'd begin to write a book herself. Dear, dear! I have nearly died with laughter over some of the stuff she'd put in—of all the jumbles of style and composition, not to say the periods of history that she mixed up! And if I'd correct her she'd get so cross, and say in her proud, little way, "Jane, you are

getting presumptuous" (she did so love long words; bless her). "You think because you keep a 'diry' that you are an authoress. But anybody could keep a diry, and yet couldn't write a book. It wants great skill to write a book—and—and imagination."

"Yes, Miss Kate," I'd say, gravely. "I know that; but I've no imagination. Only it seems to me that people would prefer to read of things that actually happened, and were true, sooner than of things one invents oneself."

Then she'd run up a tree and make faces at me, and probably keep me waiting there for an hour or two before she'd choose to come down. She called it "breaking my proud spirit." I think it was a phrase out of one of the old romances about Barons, and Knights, and beautiful ladies that she was so fond of.

However, in spite of her making fun of my diary, I found one night that she had been keeping one herself. It was in her drawer hidden under a pile of her little night-gowns, and I was looking over them to see if they wanted buttons or mending—for she was a rare one at tearing off buttons and frills, was Miss Kate—when I found a little brown pocket-book, with brass clasps and lines all ruled, and I opened it to see what it was. When I'd read half through—well—I'll just copy some in here and see if it will make any one else laugh as I did.

Mind, the child wasn't quite nine years old. This is how she began:

"Why shouldn't I my thoughts confide to my Diry, as I know Jane Watts does? Who, you will ask, is Jane? She is my attendant, and I am a poore imprisoned maiden, waiting all forlornly for capture and release.

"In parragraphs will I write my confessions, for truly so they do who are great authors of romance. And to thee, alone, oh Diry! will I confide the secrets of my breaking hart!

"Sir Rupert is a mighty Earl, and great are his possesahuns; but surely an evil catiff is he also; and the people hate him with a loyal, honest hatred; and he keeps me here because I, too, hate him; nor can he breake my proud spirit to subjection.

"(N.B.—Truly thou dost know, oh Diry, that, between yourself and me, this is all lies; but that matters not since we know it; and all romancerists are liars.)

"I walked abroad to-day in my palace grounds; and the knights were there, their baldrics and vestments ablaze in the golden sunlight; and one looked at me as if he pitied me—in sooth, a goodly youth. I extended him my white hand, glittering with rings and jewels, and he walked by my palfrey's side, and he confided to me that he would devote his life to my service; so I went to bed happy and content.

"(The truth of this is that I walked about Dayrell Court with Jane—but that doesn't sound romantick, and I mean my Diry to beat her's.)

"The aristocracy of this broad England are but gory tyrants thirsting for gain and war, and drinking blood like vampyres. Why am I not Queen? Truly well would I reign, and every one would be happy; and one day I would wed my gentle knight, when he had fought for me in the Holy Land, my glove born proudly aloft on his silver helmet; and ere the year was out we would have sons and daughters of our own to bear the good old name, and tell their children in time to come how well the brave Sir Agincourt had loved the prisoned captive—the fair and gentle Geraldine."

I had got so far, when suddenly a tremendous bang on the side of my head made me stagger all to one side, and the book fell from my hands.

Before me stood Miss Kate; or rather, a perfect little fury that had Miss Kate's flashing eyes and crimson mouth; a little passionate creature, who stormed and raved at me in fashion very unlike what I should have expected from "the fair and gentle Geraldine."

"You beast!" she cried, wrathfully. "You mean, spiteful thing! How dare you read my book? It was mine—my secrets—a sacred trust; and now, now you

know it, and I never meant any one—any one in all the wide world—to read one single line!"

"Then, my dear," I said, coolly, "you should have locked it up where no one could see it. How was I to know what it was? I thought it was only a little pocket-book."

She burst into sobs and tears, and picked up her diary, and then deliberately tore out every page in it, and tore the pages again into fragments, and stamped on them in her rage, calling me every name she could think of, or had read in these extraordinary romances of hers. And really, I didn't know what to do. The child seemed like one possessed. I let her storm and rave for a while, and then told her I must fetch master if she wouldn't be quiet; and after a while I suppose she got tired of it, for her fits of passion were short-lived, though they were violent, and she went back to bed, and covered herself up with the clothes; and, after telling me she wouldn't speak to me for a month, said, quite meekly, "Good night, Jane," and went to sleep.

Dear me! In after years how often I remembered that night! How often I wondered if the passionate, impulsive nature might not have been controlled by wise and gentle care and training! But there, she had no chance, poor little Miss Kate, and the future had to be her school, and the lessons of life her discipline.

Next morning she was quite friendly with me; but the word "diary" was never mentioned between us.

It was more than six months now since mistress had died, and all that time Miss Kate had lived this wild, untrained life—no lessons, no governess, no discipline; nothing but the adoring love of her adopted father, and the learning she got herself from books and papers. I suppose she was perfectly happy; she seemed so. But I'm afraid she read more romances than were good for her, and now and then showed a disposition to revel in "original sin," as the clergy call it; which proved that the little reckless dare-devil of the Richmond days was still in existence.

At last, master informed me that he was going home, and I was very glad to hear it.

The place looked desolate, though, without the old lady, and I could see how master missed her more and more, and how day by day he grew more feeble and took less interest in life; and when I used to ask him about the child, and whether he

would not like her to have a governess again, he'd only say :

"Oh, let her be, Jane ; let her be. Youth is short. I only wish her to be happy."

So, after all, it was not so much of a surprise or shock to us when, one day, the old gentleman took to his bed and never rose again ; though he seemed to have no pain or illness—only just to drift away quietly and slowly.

The end came sooner than any of us expected, and then poor little Miss Kate was left by will to the guardianship of Sir Rupert Dayrell, for so he and master had arranged ; and when she came of age she was to have all master's money, subject to a few legacies to distant relatives and servants—for we were all most generously remembered, and I was to have fifty pounds a year as long as I lived and attended to Miss Kate.

And then came bustle and confusion, and lawyers fussing and meddling with everything, and writing to Sir Rupert, who didn't come till two weeks after the funeral.

Of course the Richmond property had to be sold, and so I and Miss Kate had to go to Dayrell Court, though I didn't like the idea at all. I thought it very odd, too, of Sir Rupert when he told me that, out of deference to Mr. Vining's wishes, he had promised not to tell Miss Kate her history until she was old enough to understand it.

For the present, he merely wished her to look upon him as the guardian appointed by Mr. Vining.

It seemed to me that he couldn't have much affection for his own child, when he could let her be under his roof in ignorance of the relationship between them. But he was a strange man, and he told me he hated children. He engaged a governess for Miss Kate, and also a house-keeper and a few servants to keep the place in order ; and that done, he took himself off again, and for years we never saw him.

About this time I did the most foolish thing I ever did in my life—I got married.

I fell in love with one of the under gardeners, a handsome ne'er-do-weel, with a tongue that could win an angel from heaven ; and of course he knew all about my fifty pounds a year, and that I had saved a nice little sum in the five years I had been at the Court, and somehow or other he got round me and we were married

quite secret, for I didn't want to leave Miss Kate, and he didn't want me to lose the fifty pounds a year. I thought he was just perfect ; but then I suppose my eyes were blind with love, for I was soon undeceived. He drank, and he was always asking me for money, and nice goings on I heard of afterwards ; though, living at the Court as I did, I never knew of them at the time.

Then one day a bomb-shell in the shape of a letter arrived from Sir Rupert. He said I was to bring Miss Kate at once to Paris. She was to go to a foreign school to be finished, and he had heard of an excellent one somewhere near Paris, and he would meet us at the station and take us to his hotel.

Miss Kate was not to delay for clothes and things, she could get them all there ; and he wrote full instructions as to trains and steamers so that we might have no trouble, and sent us the money in a registered letter, and of course there was nothing for it but to obey.

I didn't like leaving my handsome young husband, but of course he vowed and promised all sorts of sweet things, and as for the fifty pounds a year that was all right so long as I stayed at the Court, even if Miss Kate was at school. So we started off with ourselves, she, full of glee, and wonder, and delight, and I—well, just a little bit low-spirited, so to say, but not sorry to have the chance of seeing foreign parts, of which I'd read a great deal, and heard a great deal from Miss Kate. But had I known what the English Channel was like, not wild horses would have dragged me across—no, nor hundreds of pounds as reward.

Talk of agonies—and that child only laughing, and enjoying it all as cool and as comfortable as if she were in the library at Dayrell Court. But there, as the novelists say, I will "drop the curtain" over the horrors of that first voyage, and reserve the accounts of my foreign experiences for another chapter.

CHAPTER IV. FROM CALAIS TO PARIS.

I FELT a limp and melancholy object as I reached the deck of the steamer, and found that we were close to the French coast. A very wretched-looking coast it was, too ; nothing but sandbanks and low, stunted trees.

Then as for the town, Calay, as they called it—of all the dirty, miserable, ill-

smelling places! And oh, the men on the pier, with their blue blouses and cotton trousers; actually cotton! Why, no English working man would have condescended to wear such things. And their language—Lord deliver us! What a language it was! I'm sure no decent Christian could make head or tail of it!

Then the way they seized our luggage—never so much as “by your leave” even—and started off with it, goodness knows where; and the rushing, and the screaming, and the noise! I was fairly bewildered, and I don't know what I should have done but for some gentleman, who had been talking to Miss Kate—a Frenchman, but spoke English beautifully—and he came forward and explained that they had to examine the luggage (baggage they called it) for the Customs, but it would be all right if we'd give him the keys; and he meanwhile showed us the Paris train, and got us a carriage which was so high that we had to climb up as if it were the wall of a house, and then he ran back and said the “baggage” was all right, and would we like anything to eat? I felt too ill and queer to have touched anything, but he marched Miss Kate off to the “bouffey,” whatever that was, and she came back by-and-by and said she'd had soup and chicken, and felt ever so much better. I suppose that was because she was a growing girl, and with a stomach steady enough to stand that awful sea, which I certainly hadn't.

Then the Frenchman he brought us in fruit, and what they called “sandwiches.” Poor benighted things! A long loaf cut in half, with a piece of badly-cured ham in the middle of it.

But then, what can you expect of foreigners? I'm sure I never thought so much of my own country, or was so pleased at being a British subject as when I saw what other nations were like, and had an experience of their ways on that trip to Paris. Not that French folk call it so, but “Par-ree,” though why I never could understand, seeing that *ris* spells “*ris*,” sure enough.

Well, that young French fellow, he travelled all the way with us, and very nice and amusing he was, though he spoke very funnily sometimes. But Miss Kate seemed to understand him, and he cheered her up, and kept her from worrying me; for I was very down, what with leaving my Tom, and having grave doubts about the daughter of the man who kept

the “Dayrell Arms,” a forward young minx, who was always making eyes at him—Tom, I mean—and hated me like poison, because she wanted to marry him herself.

Thinking of her and of him, and of the horrors of that dreadful Channel, I fell asleep, and didn't wake till quite late in the afternoon. I felt really hungry by that time, and was glad enough of one of those loaf-sandwiches, and some of the red sour vinegar they call wine.

Miss Kate and the Frenchman were now quite good friends; and he had given her his card (by the way, he was a Count, for Count D'Aurigny was printed on it), and she had told him she was going to school in Paris, and her guardian's name, and everything about herself.

I was surprised to find he treated her just like a grown-up young lady, and she only a slip of a girl of fourteen, and little, too, for her age, though as pretty as ever, and with quite grown-up manners, so to say.

I don't think she found the journey long—at least, she said she didn't—and the young Count he told her lots about “Par-ree,” and what a beautiful city it was, and how life there was life; and the Booleyvards, and the theatres, and the gardens, and the cafes, and Heaven knows what; and so it went on till we saw hundreds and thousands of lights flashing up through the darkness of the night; and the train puffed and screamed itself into a great big station, and there, thank goodness, was Sir Rupert looking out for us, and I felt as if my troubles were ended.

I believe Miss Kate told him how kind the young French Count had been, for they lifted their hats and talked away in a language I didn't understand, but which I concluded was “parley-voing,” as we say in England; and then we were put into a cab and driven along all sorts of fine streets and places until we reached Sir Rupert's hotel.

I thought it was a palace myself, never having seen anything so grand or so large in my life; and then we were shown into a lovely room all furnished in red velvet, and with a smaller one opening out of it which was for me; and such beds, with a gold crown let into the ceiling, and with lace curtains falling from it—lovely! I'm sure the Queen never had a better room than was that of Miss Kate's, and mine just the same, only smaller.

We took off our cloaks and hats, and

very dusty and dirty we looked; not to be wondered at after travelling all day; and Miss Kate unfastened her dress-bodice and tucked up her pretty hair, and she said to me: "Now, Jane, for a good splasher!" and emptied all the water into the basin, and then looked for some soap. But there was only an empty dish on the wash-stand.

"What am I to do, Jane?" she said. "I can't get these blacks off without soap."

"I'm sure I don't know, miss," I said.

"Shall we ring and ask for some?"

"But they only understand French," she said, "and I really don't think I know a whole sentence. Let me see——"

She sat down and thought a moment. Then she said:

"Yes, I think I can manage it. You ring the bell."

I looked about, and at last found the bell. There was something printed on a card just above it; but I didn't notice that, and being in French, I couldn't have read it if I had.

Meanwhile, Miss Kate slipped off the skirt of her dress as well as the bodice, and gave it me to brush, and there she was, capering about the room in her white petticoat, and with bare arms and neck, when there came a knock at the door, and in walked—a waiter! I gave a scream, and Miss Kate looked astonished.

"Vous n'ate par la fam-der-shom," she said in French, and I really felt quite proud to think how well she could speak it.

He shook his head.

"No, mamselle," he said, in English. "You rang one time, that is for waiter (garçon); deux fois (twice), for the fam-der-shom. Pardon—I will tell her."

"Lord's sake! Miss Kate," I cried, "why didn't you throw your cloak round you? What will that man think? He'll tell every one in the hotel."

"Oh," said Miss Kate, laughing fit to kill herself, "oh, Jane, wasn't it funny? How astonished he did look! And I'd got my sentence so nice and then had to make up another, and all the time his English was better than my French. Oh, isn't it lovely? What times I shall have!"

"I think he was very rude," I answered, for I felt rather cross. "I'm sure he stared enough."

"Perhaps he admired me," she said, saucily, as she danced off to a long mirror to have a look at herself. "Frenchmen think a great deal of a Mees Anglaise, you

know. If I had been seventeen instead of fourteen, now——"

And then she danced to and fro, for all the world like a leaf coquetting with the wind—her little feet twinkling under the lace and cambric of her skirt, and her pretty white arms now tossed above her head, now resting on her hips, just for all the world—as I told her—like a ballet-girl whom I'd seen in a Christmas pantomime once in London.

At last the "fam-der-shom" came—a young, pert-looking female in a big frilled cap, with long ends flying down her back.

Miss Kate stopped her capers and began to think of her French again.

"Mademoiselle mer dermonde!" said the girl, quickly. The words seemed to rattle off her tongue like peas dropping on a plate.

"Wee—wee," said Miss Kate, "Je—Je d'sire——" She stopped, then darted off to the wash-stand, and took up the empty dish. "Ill ny—er—par der savong," she went on, getting very red and hot beneath the cool, impudent stare of that French hussey.

"Savong!" says the girl, and laughs. "Mais que vous êtes drôles, vous Anglais! Toujours savong. Nous n'avong pas de savong à l'hôtel, mademoiselle. Il fo que vous l'apportay voo-maim. Compreny!"

Kate shook her head.

"Voo-maim. She means myself," she said; "but I never thought of bringing any. What am I to do? I can never get all this black off without soap. Just look at my hands!"

"Tell her to ask the waiter to ask Sir Rupert," I said.

"Oh no," cried Miss Kate, "I can't put all that into French. What a nuisance! Now—why, what is that idiot grinning at? Alley dong—go!" she cried, crossly, and pointed to the door. The fam-der-shom disappeared immediately, and Miss Kate and I had to do without "savong."

After a time Sir Rupert came and knocked at the door, and took her down to dinner; so she explained her difficulties. He laughed, and told her that they never supplied soap in foreign hotels, though she was not to think from that that they never used it themselves—which most English tourists declared—but they expected travellers to have it in their travelling-bags as naturally as they had brushes and combs, and other toilet necessaries.

Then they went away, and I was left alone, and sat by the window, looking out

on the brilliant streets, and the hurrying crowds, and feeling rather dull and lonesome, until presently the friendly waiter, who spoke English, came in and brought me some "dinnay," as he called it; and very nice it was, though I'd rather have had one glass of English beer than that whole bottle of red wine which was served with it.

And then in an hour or so, Miss Kate came up, being tired, and sleepy, and quite ready for bed; and provided with two cakes of "savong" which Sir Rupert had given her, so, as she said, we might both go to sleep feeling clean.

And I unpacked her box, and put out her best frock for the morning, when Sir Rupert was to take us to see some of the sights of Paris. And when she was in bed, and asleep, I went to my own room and soon followed her example.

CHAPTER V.

SOME IMPRESSIONS OF FOREIGN LIFE.

"TRAVELLERS see strange sights." Well, that's as true a proverb as any King Solomon ever made. I'm sure if I was to say all the strange things I heard and saw in that one fortnight when I stayed in Paris, no one would credit it. Indeed, I couldn't put down half, or I shouldn't be let publish my book by the Lord Chamberlain, who I've heard is very particular, and reads everything that goes to the press in order that the morals of the English people should be kept pure; and, indeed, it is much to their credit, and it's a pity there's no Lord Chamberlain in France, for they need one if ever any people did.

They may be better now—I don't know. But, of course, I was there many, many years ago, and I hear that everything is changed, and they've got a Republic; and, besides, heaps more English people go abroad now to what they did then, especially to Paris, and no doubt they've done them good, and taught them it's not decent to have pictures and statues that haven't any clothing—not as much as Eve in the Garden of Eden—staring at you from shop-windows, and public galleries; and as for the brazen creatures in those "cafes," and on their Booleyyardes—well, I can't trust myself to write of them.

Talk of Frenchmen being polite! Well, so are grinning apes in a menagerie polite. Bowing, and smirking, and leering in the face of every decent woman, and thinking no more of standing at a theatre or cafe door, and passing remarks on you from top

to toe, than if you were made of wood, and couldn't understand or feel.

It was wonderful how soon I began to pick up the meaning of words, and so did Miss Kate; but then Sir Rupert helped her, for French came as natural to him as English, which I think accounted for much of his wickedness.

And we had so much shopping to do, that I got to know heaps and heaps of expressions, and even could put sentences together so that the poor uneducated things who didn't know English were able to understand me. Besides, the waiter at the hotel, Antoine, taught me a lot, and we got friendly together, until one day he wanted to kiss me, upon which I boxed his ears, and told him I was a married woman! Now, on knowing that, an Englishman would have begged pardon, and never said another word; but this French fellow, if you please, only said, as cool as possible:

"Oh, madame, but that makes it that you are the more attractive."

Dear me! I've just copied all that out of my old diary. How-funny it seems to look back now and think of that time when I was young and pretty, and could have had a French lover had I chosen; just for all the world like the ladies of quality in the plays and novels, of which the French nation are so fond!

Well, thank Heaven, I wasn't of that sort, having been respectably brought up and educated, and attended Sunday-school and learnt my duty to my neighbour, so I sent Antoine to the right-about pretty quick, though he'd still kiss his hand to me and make those grimaces which all Frenchmen do when they think they are captivating you. And that hussy of a chambermaid caught him once or twice, and was so mad.

That old diary of mine tells me lots of things about that time in Paris.

Sir Rupert was really very kind, and let me go everywhere with Miss Kate, just as if I were her governess instead of her maid; and bought her lovely things to wear—much too good for school, I thought—but then of course it was all out of her own money. As for Miss Kate herself, she was just mad with delight, and thought Paris a perfect heaven, and I believe she imagined that the school she was going to, which was at Anteuil, would be a sort of Paradise; and, indeed, the two ladies who kept it—the "Demoiselles Laroche" was their name—were perfectly charming, and the

school was beautifully situated and had large grounds, and I think there were only about twenty young ladies there—mostly English—so it seemed as if she would be happy enough for three years. I was to remain on at the Court, and be maid to her when she came back.

The fortnight was drawing to a close. I felt very sorry at leaving my little mistress; sorry, too, at leaving the beautiful city, which looked its best and gayest in this early spring-time. I knew, of course, that it was not at all as it appeared on the surface, and that poverty, and misery, and shame, and horror, and vileness, and crime, lurked like shadows behind that outer glow and splendour. But how splendid it was on that surface! What a world of tumult, colour, laughter, change, riot, after the quiet Devon village I had left!

I have always loved the country best. There seems no rest, no peace, no space to breathe in or be glad in the great thronged cities. And for the poor and the workers it is terrible—always the dull toil in close workrooms and narrow streets, and nothing to gladden or beautify their lives; no gleam of the blue heavens; no space of grass and trees; no song of birds in the dawns; no fresh, sweet scents of flowers; no shade of wood and forest. Nothing of these to make the toil less wearisome, the burden lighter, the daily task less hard.

If any one looks at life and thinks of it at all, I am sure they must wonder why such hundreds and thousands of human beings are born into it only for suffering. It does not seem just or right. Clever people and religious people seem to have settled it to their satisfaction; but I don't think the starving and the suffering look on it quite in the same way. I doubt very much also whether if any great Bishop or Church dignitary had to step out of his palace and give up his income, and his carriages and servants, and such-like luxuries, he'd be inclined to talk about the sins of covetousness and the wickedness of giving in to temptation quite so glibly. Only the tempted know what temptation is; only the suffering know the weight of pain, the burden of existence.

We judge each other much too harshly, both rich and poor. I think it is because there is too little real human sympathy and human interest in humanity. Of course, I'm not clever enough to go into details and arguments; but if one sets oneself to think about these matters at all,

it's extraordinary how the thoughts come and where they lead one on to. I've got perfectly dazed sometimes, trying to puzzle things out, and the why and the wherefore of them all.

But I dare say I'm not the only person in the world who's done that.

I seem to have strayed away from my subject again. When I refer to the old diary, I find that I parted from Miss Kate very low-spirited; and no wonder, considering I had not only to leave her, but face that horrible journey and voyage all by myself. However, the going back was not quite so bad, for the sea was smooth, and my few words of French helped me a bit; and once on British soil again, I felt as if I had really seen something to be proud of, and had enough to tell my fellow-servants for months to come.

And indeed they kept me at it, for 'twas a dull enough life at the Court, and some of them had never left Devon in their lives, and couldn't hear enough about the great French city, and the voyage, and the "Mounseers," and how they dressed, and the strange things they ate and did. So I was quite a person of consequence for a time.

Tom was very glad to see me, and vowed he had never so much as looked at the girl at the "Dayrell Arms," which I was quite foolish and loving enough to believe. I shouldn't do so now. In fact, I don't hold with men at all; they're all more or less bad; if it's not before marriage, it's after, and women are great fools to believe in them.

As long as they're sweethearts, it's all right, of course; but once let them get hold of us, and know we're their own property, and 'tis quite another thing. I've had a pretty good experience, and am only saying what I know.

If life hasn't been over and above kind to me, it's at least taught me some truths that other women will be the better of knowing, and I'm not going to hold them back.

But as this part of my story is only preliminary to what came after, I must begin to hurry on.

Miss Kate wrote to me often from school, and seemed very happy there. Now and then in the holidays Sir Rupert would go to see her, or take her to different foreign places, and, from her accounts, she was always beautifully dressed, and always seemed to have lots of admirers.

I didn't much like her mixing with all

those foreign folk, and was always afraid she might fall in love with one; and I thought Sir Rupert was a very careless guardian, considering how pretty she was, and how rich she might be. However, it wasn't my place to say anything. I could only stay there and wait for her to come home again, and hope that the three years had not altered what was good, and loving, and warm-hearted in the child I had nursed and brought up.

SOME THEATRICAL REMINISCENCES.

MY first visit to a London theatre dates as far back as 1826, in which year I heard Pasta—then in her prime—and Curioni in Mayr's "*Medea in Corinto*." I had previously, when quite a child, enjoyed the privilege of witnessing a performance of the "*School for Scandal*" at Cheltenham, organised for the benefit of a local charity, and supported almost exclusively by amateurs, the sole exception being the Lady Teazle of the charming Maria Foote. It was owing to the good-natured intercession of Colonel Berkeley, afterwards Lord Fitzhardinge, an intimate friend of my father, that I was permitted to "sit up" for the occasion; he himself playing Charles Surface, and his brother Grantley, well known as a sporting writer, Joseph. I have been told—my own recollections of the eventful night being necessarily of the haziest—that the Colonel was considered to be one of the best non-professional actors of his time in England, and that this was nearly his last appearance on the stage; however this may be, I never saw him on it again, but had frequent opportunities subsequently of admiring his fair coadjutress in several of her leading characters, and notably in Letitia Hardy, and Maria Darlington.

Even before my schoolboy days, I had already stored up ineffaceable memories of Edmund Kean and his excellent fellow-tragedian, Young; had revelled—oh, how heartily!—in the drollery of the inimitable Paul Pry; and, as a matter of course, had fallen desperately in love with the siren Vestris; and in every succeeding year, whether temporarily liberated from the thralldom of the terrible Pinckney at East Sheen, or from the far less onerous discipline of Eton, I never missed a chance of enlarging my experiences of

the London stage. I well remember, among many other celebrities, Charles Kemble, Fawcett, and Maria Tree in the "*Merry Monarch*"; James Wallack in the "*Brigand*"; Farren and the pretty Miss Love in "*Charles the Twelfth*"; the rival vocalists, Miss Paton and Kitty Stephens; Henry Phillips and Miss Romer in the "*Mountain Sylph*"; Fanny Kemble in "*Isabella*"; Mrs Yates and "glorious" John Reeve in "*Victorina*," and the "*Wreck Ashore*"; O. Smith and Keeley in the "*Bottle Imp*"; Planché's early extravaganzas at the Olympic; and the début of Charles Mathews in the "*Hump-backed Lover*," and the "*Old and Young Stager*." Nor must I forget Joe Grimaldi, whom I only saw once; Bologna, Barnes, and Ellar in pantomime; and the two great triumphs of Cartlitch and Gomersal at Astley's—"Mazappa," and the "*Battle of Waterloo*."

In 1837 I left England for the Continent, and from that time my theatrical experiences—barring occasional flying visits to London—were for a long period almost entirely Parisian, my stay in the "gay city" having exceeded twenty-five years. During this protracted sojourn I may safely assert that few of its inhabitants, native or exotic, were more indefatigable playgoers than myself; from the Opéra and the Comédie Française, down to Bobino and the Petit Lazari, each of the twenty-two theatres then existing in Paris and its suburbs was more or less familiar to me—in most cases not as a mere casual visitor, but as a constant habitué. It may, however, be premised that amusement was a secondary consideration, as I had a special object in view; being then engaged on a work published in 1846 under the title of the "*Theatres of Paris*," a thorough acquaintance with the different repertoires, as well as something more than a superficial knowledge of the actors who played in them, was indispensable. Whether I partially succeeded in my task or not is now a matter of little moment; very few of the artists described still survive, and the book itself, having been out of print for many years, is probably almost forgotten.

This "labour of love," however—for such in truth it was—had one agreeable result, inasmuch as my researches necessarily brought me into contact with the most eminent dramatic notabilities of the time, including others who had long since retired from the stage. To many of these

I was indebted for anecdotal reminiscences, and hitherto unpublished personal details; and it is a real pleasure of memory in my old age to record, among those who kindly exerted themselves in my behalf, such world-wide celebrities as Regnier, of the Comédie Française; Bocage, the original Buridan of the "Tour de Neale"; Roger, the "Prophète" of the opera; Mademoiselle Rachel; Madame Stoltz, the Léonore of "La Favorite"; Mademoiselle Rose Chéri; and Madame Doche.

In later years I made the acquaintance of Perlet, whose Parisian career had been summarily closed owing to his refusal to exchange his position at the Gymnase for an engagement at the Théâtre Français, and who, in virtue of a regulation then in force, but now happily fallen into disuse, was forbidden to exercise his profession within twenty leagues of Paris. After long years of provincial "starring," he had finally settled down in a modest "entresol" of the Rue Geoffroy-Marie, where, although considerably past the meridian of life, he devoted himself to an exhaustive study of his art, and published a remarkable essay on the influence of the drama on the manners of the day. He was tall in stature, and as thin as a lath, but, despite his age, as upright as a grenadier. His memory was a perfect storehouse of anecdote, and when "i' th' vein," he would delight his hearers with graphic reminiscences of Talma, Mademoiselle Duchesnois, and other great artists of his youth, generally winding up with a scathing criticism of the modern stage, and especially of his "bête noire," Mademoiselle Rachel.

A very different type was Arnal, the quaintest of humourists on the boards, and in private life the gravest and most reserved of men. He rather shunned than courted the society of his colleagues, and was consequently no favourite with them. Contrary to the usual custom of actors when off duty, he was never seen in any theatre but his own; and even there he seldom, if ever, appeared in the green-room. Once on the stage, however, the metamorphosis was complete; he was no longer the serious, misanthropic recluse, but the joyous interpreter of the quips and cranks of his habitual purveyors, Duvert and Lauzanne, the effect of which on the risible muscles of the audience was irresistible. He never, under any circumstances, lost his presence of mind, but had always his wits about him; and I remember

a case in point. One evening at the Vaudeville the spectators were suddenly startled by a false alarm of fire, and a general confusion prevailed. The occupants of the pit and stalls with one accord made for the doors, and in another minute the theatre would have been entirely deserted, when Arnal, who happened to be on the stage, came forward, and coolly enquired what was the matter. Shouts of "Fire! fire!" greeted him on every side, and the stampede continued until the actor, who had meanwhile ascertained by a reassuring gesture from the stage-manager behind the scenes that the report was unfounded, assumed an indignant air, and exclaimed with a comic energy which at once arrested the panic:

"Ah çà, Messieurs, do you suppose, if there were the slightest danger, that I should be such an idiot as to stop here?"

That nervous, fidgety little being, Bouffé the most versatile and finished comedian of his time, shortly after his engagement by Nestor Roqueplan at the Variétés, came into the "foyer" one evening, and related to us a visit he had paid that afternoon to Alexandre Dumas, who had promised him an excellent part in a piece called "Le Garde Forestier."

"In the course of conversation," said Bouffé, "he explained to me his system of composition, which is simple enough. 'When I have nothing better to do,' he said, 'I buy a franc's worth of paper, and write a play or a novel, as the case may be. Whether it succeed or fail, I run no risk for I can only lose my outlay of one franc. On the other hand, how many people counting actors, musicians, scene-painters, costumiers, and printers, do you suppose I give employment to? Two hundred at the very least; and, if every one did a much, we should have less misery and fewer revolutions.'"

That worthy chip of an old block Dumas the younger, has inherited no small share of the paternal gift of repartee. Many years ago, when the pair were travelling in Spain, they came to a part of the country said to be infested by brigands.

"What idiots we were," exclaimed Dumas fils, "to forget our pistols!"

"You might as well speak in the singular number," quietly suggested his father.

"True," replied the son, with a smile. "I stand corrected. I ought to have said what an idiot you were to forget them!"

Does any one now remember among the

thousand and one men of letters perpetually springing up in Paris like mushrooms, that singular type of self-conceit and placid assurance, André de Goy ? To hear him dilate on his visionary projects—each of which was to be an infallible stepping-stone to celebrity—you would have supposed yourself listening, not to a writer ambitious of distinction, but to one who had already attained it ; whereas, in reality, he might have been compared to the train described by Mr. Burnand in his analysis of “Bradshaw,” which “always starts but never arrives.” His illusory hopes, invariably magnified into certainties, were alluded to with an air of such profound conviction that even those who knew him best were occasionally taken in. His literary baggage was small, chiefly consisting of translations from Dickens and Ainsworth, and adaptations of “Money” and the “Battle of Life,” both failures ; the only successful effort of his pen being “Monsieur va au Cercle,” a one-act farce played at the Palais Royal, which had a fair run, and his exultation consequently knew no bounds.

“Write for the stage, mon bon,” he said to one of his intimates, “if you want to make your fortune. Follow my example, and the money will come in faster than you can count it. What do you suppose my piece has already brought me in ?”

“Why,” replied his friend, “as it has been acted pretty often here and in the country, perhaps four or five thousand francs.”

“Miseré !” exclaimed André. “Say thirty thousand, and you will be nearer the mark.”

Another characteristic anecdote is related as follows, by Aurélien Scholl :

“I met de Goy one evening on the Boulevard.

“‘The Café Anglais,’ he said, ‘is rather dear. I have just dined there, and handed a five hundred franc note to the waiter.’

“‘Five hundred francs for one person !’ I exclaimed. ‘Impossible !’

“‘A fact, my dear fellow. I believe he gave me back some change ; but really I don’t know how much.’

“‘Perhaps four hundred and ninety francs,’ I suggested.

“‘Something like that,’ coolly replied de Goy.”

Ponchielli, the popular composer of “La Gioconda,” according to an informant, who knew him well, was as deplorably afflicted with absence of mind as the poet Bowles

and the provincial manager Thornton. Examples of the maestro’s infirmity—genuine or apocryphal—might be cited ad infinitum. The following, however, may, I believe, be relied on as strictly authentic.

He was staying with Ricordi, at Milan, when a visitor was announced, and Ponchielli, who was still in his travelling costume, retired to his room for the purpose of changing his dress ; but came back in a minute or two with a bewildered air.

“What is the matter ?” enquired his host.

“I can’t make it out,” replied the other. “I have searched my trunk from top to bottom, and can find nothing in it but a heap of music.”

Next day the mystery was solved by the arrival of a letter from a publisher at Florence, complaining that instead of the music Ponchielli had promised to send him, he had received a box full of clothes.

On the first performance of an opera at Venice, the composer was called for at the close ; whereupon Ponchielli, who happened to be behind the scenes, imagining that one of his own works had been played, went on the stage in compliance with the summons, and to the stupefaction and infinite amusement of the audience, gravely bowed his acknowledgements.

The well-known dramatist, Palgrave Simpson, who died after a long and painful illness, on the nineteenth of August, 1887, was an old and valued friend of mine. I first met him in Paris towards the end of 1843, at which period I was engaged in translating the Vicomte d’Arlincourt’s work, “The Three Kingdoms,” published by Mr. Bentley in the ensuing year. Being anxious that the French and English versions of the book should appear simultaneously, d’Arlincourt was insatiable in his demands for “copy ;” and it was finally settled that the latter half of the second volume should be handed over to Palgrave, who, with the aid of a Scotchman then residing in Paris, managed to complete the task in time. Soon after, my new acquaintance removed his household gods to London ; and, although we frequently corresponded, I almost entirely lost sight of him until my return to England in 1870. Since then, a month rarely elapsed without my visiting him in his Brompton home ; and up to a few days before his death I constantly passed my Sunday afternoon in listening to his experiences of literary and theatrical life. He told me that his first attempt as an author was a story for

"Blackwood," for which he received twenty-five guineas; he subsequently tried his hand, with fair success, at novel-writing, and ultimately became one of the most prolific dramatists of his time. At a rough computation he must have written at least seventy or eighty pieces, a few of which, and notably "A Scrap of Paper," a clever adaptation of Sardou's "*Pattes de Mouche*," still keep the stage.

One of his earliest productions was "Poor Cousin Walter," the principal character in which had been designed by him for Leigh Murray, a young actor he had remarked at the Strand Theatre. When it was finished, he took the manuscript to the "jeune premier's" house, and left it in charge of the latter's wife, her husband being then ill in bed; she looked at him, however, so curiously, and had evidently such difficulty in maintaining her gravity, that, unable to account for this singular reception, he naturally felt offended, and went away in a huff. Next day a cab stopped at his door, the occupant of which was no other than the actor himself, announcing that he liked the piece, and would read it to Farren (at that time the manager of the Strand). "And now," continued Leigh Murray, "I must thank you for probably saving my life. I should tell you that my wife and I have often noticed you passing through our street, and as you wear a beard—rather an unusual ornament nowadays—we christened you 'the brigand;' and once, seeing you in the act of bestowing largesses on a crossing-sweeper, we added to it the epithet 'benevolent.' When you came to our house yesterday, my wife could hardly keep her countenance, which must have seemed to you very rude; and after you were gone, she ran up to my room, where I was suffering horribly from a quinsy, showed me the manuscript, and told me to guess who had brought it. I named Bayle Bernard, Maddison Morton, and two or three more, but she shook her head, and at last screamed out, 'What do you say to the benevolent brigand?' This so tickled me that I burst into a fit of laughter, and broke my quinsy; so that, thanks to you, I am now all right again!"

Since the above was written, I have seen a somewhat similar version of this anecdote in Mr. Coleman's "Players and Playwrights I have known." But, as Palgrave was in the habit of relating stories of his past life whenever he found a listener, I venture to leave this as it stands.

Palgrave Simpson once told me an anecdote of Julia Bennett, one of the most popular members of the Haymarket company under Webster's management. She married a diamond merchant named Barrow, and came one morning to rehearsal in a smartly-appointed brougham.

"Look at Julia's new carriage," exclaimed a young actress standing at the window; "isn't she a lucky woman?"

"Don't be too sure of that, my dear," said Mrs. Glover. "Julia keeps her brougham now; but, for all we know, she may, perhaps, one day have to keep her Barrow!"

As it turned out, the words were prophetic; for the diamond merchant ultimately lost his fortune, and but for his talented wife's salary, would, probably, have found himself in the position of the gentleman described in "*L'Homme Blasé*," who "*non-seulement n'avait pas de foin dans ses bottes, mais n'avait même pas de bottes pour y mettre le foin!*"

As far as the theatre was concerned, my good friend was certainly no "laudator temporis acti"; an over-indulgent appreciator of the modern drama and its interpreters, he was persistently sceptical as to the merits of bygone celebrities; doubted the supremacy of Garrick, and declined altogether to believe in the traditional super-excellence of Mrs. Siddons. Of John Kemble he had a personal, and by no means agreeable, recollection.

"When I was very young," he said, "my father, a great admirer of the classical school, took me to see him in 'Hamlet,' at Norwich (my birthplace), and after the play asked me how I liked him. 'Not at all,' I replied. 'He talked so slowly, and stopped so long between every word, that I was half asleep before he had done.'"

"What did your father say to that?" I enquired.

"He boxed my ears, and told me I was a fool. But, for all that, I know I was right."

I cannot guarantee that the following anecdote has never before appeared in print; but it is good enough to bear repeating.

"Passing through Leicester Square one morning," said Palgrave, "I met Balfe, who stopped and asked me, point-blank, if I would write him a libretto for an opera, saying that he could not stand Bunn's eternal twaddle any longer, and wanted a 'book' very badly. I thought it over for a minute or two, and finally consented.

"'Bravo!' he cried, 'we shall get on famously together; you are just the man to suit me, for, at all events, old fellow, you've no infernal poetry in you!'

"I never could quite make up my mind," added Palgrave, "whether I ought to take that as a compliment or the reverse!"

ON THE BEST PERIOD OF LIFE.

ONE day in early summer, when we were moving with delightful speed between the blue of the heavens and the blue of the Atlantic, our talk fell into an argument about the comparative worth to a man of the different epochs of his life: assuming, of course, that our typical man was an average man; neither a hectic genius whose vitality is all concentrated in one furious lustre of his years, nor a judicious drone whose thoughts and actions at three-score and ten vary hardly an iota from his thoughts and actions at five-and-twenty.

My friend was a man in what is currently called the prime of life; that is, he was about forty-two. But he had received a mortal blow from the angel Azrael, and he knew that his days were numbered. He had been wintering in a Southern island, among sunshine and gentle zephyrs. This had done him but little temporary good, and had not lengthened the interval which the doctors told him was as much as he could expect on this side the grave. He was hurrying home, therefore, anxious as a youth to be once more amid his paternal acres, and surrounded by faces as familiar and friendly as his own elms and oaks.

His disease was not of a kind to impair his judgement in a matter such as this. Nor was he an ungenerous man, disposed to carp at his fellow-men. He had lived thoroughly, in an honest sense of the word, from his twentieth year, gathering in good store of experience among men of various kinds, and journeying in different parts of the world. Thus the knowledge that time had enabled him to collect in the wallet of his mind was of no worthless or restricted class.

Now, had my friend been a mere sentimentalist, and a person prone to take his ideas from sentimental literature, he would of course have said downright that no epoch of life is half so enjoyable as early youth. Lord Byron's pining note has

echoed much too far into the century. Doubtless, before Byron's time, men have bewailed their boyhood, and wished themselves again under the sway of a birch-rod and short commons. But surely such a wish has never been strong testimony of worth in the wisher. It is all very well to sing once in a way:

Ye scenes of my childhood, whose loved recollection

Embitters the present, compared with the past.

But the mood passes; and the poet ought to regret having perpetuated in print a fancy as fleeting as the shadows of sunset. The chances are, however, that the songster in such a case is no fair mouthpiece for the community whose ideas he, with his superior gift of vocalisation, is supposed to enunciate. He is either sick at heart, or bodily broken, or the victim of some misfortune peculiar to himself. Nevertheless he presumes in his verse to speak for all the world, and to tell you and me—who, thank Heaven, know vastly better—that we are very wretched beings, and that we were happier far when we had no wills of our own, but little pocket-money, a weight of Latin and Greek verbs for ever pressing upon our brains, not one faculty in ten of those given us by Nature brought even to the first stage of its fruition, and, in short, nothing in the world to boast of except high spirits. High spirits, forsooth! As if the little woodland bird, newly caught on a villainous limed twig, and thrust into a cage of six-inch dimensions, were likely to find its high spirits, under such circumstances, a blessing! "Kill me or tame me quick!" the poor little warbler cut short in life might with more reason exclaim. And so with the boy in the like case.

In fact, both of us, as we leaned our chairs hard against the bulwarks, to see the snowy outgush of foam from the sides of the ship, agreed to condemn early youth outright. It is but a rudderless rushing here and there in chase of will-o'-the-wisp. Even the very friendships with which it is associated are no credit to it. They are the work of the after-time. Discreeter age tries the many in its scales, rejects nearly all, and retains but few. These few are due to chance, and a subtle sort of human affinity, rather than to merit in the youth himself. It is, if you like, the dumb yearning forth of the spirit in its embryonic, its caged period of existence. Indeed, there is no little in common between two friends whose intimacy dates

from boyhood, and a couple of ancient mariners who have been shipwrecked on divers disagreeable rocks, and have suffered all the picturesque privations and positive hardships that ought to attend a thorough-paced shipwreck. In each case, it is largely a fellowship of woe.

Turn the page upon early youth, then ; nor give it a chance of the prize in this contest.

"I am inclined to think," said my friend, "that from twenty-one to twenty-five might be the best years of life."

Upon one condition only that seems possible. The condition is, that the man be in bonds of noble servitude of admiration to a noble woman. There will be much of disquiet attendant upon such a service ; but it will be the restlessness of sure and certain growth, and growth in the highest direction. Ah ! but the woman must be of exalted mould—little short, indeed, of a divinity. Otherwise, it were diabolical. The Greeks had more than an inkling of this method, although, as a rule, they could not rear such high-souled women as it is the privilege of modern Europe to excel in. With them the philosophers played the part of the woman. Often they played it detestably, but not always. The rare exceptions were those unsexed men who had attained to the state of pure contemplative spirits, to whom the world is but the shadow of a world. They made Greece. Similarly, the woman of our age who, from the most unselfish motives, devotes herself to others—whether to individuals, or classes, or entire nations—has in her the power to make the man in his early manhood. This is well known ; but it is worth iteration. If only we could keep colleges of tried women for the finishing of the education of our boys ! I warrant the result would be astounding. Tutors and the grand tour are now somewhat obsolete. In the nineteenth century they are almost childish finials to a man's intellectual developement. The pupil nowadays has shot big game out West during his vacations, ere the tutor in pickle for him has finished his own stupendous education. But if only we could have these colleges of women, the tutor would be needed neither in theory nor practice. Alas ! it is a dream, and likely to remain as unsubstantial as a dream.

This condition unfulfilled, the age from twenty-one to twenty-five falls from the pre-eminence. Even as to the boy life seems aimless, so to the man at this age

life is only too full of aims. Passions and aspirations deafen him with their incessant pleading for satisfaction. He has no peace. No sooner has he conciliated one of his petitioners than another, more merciless in its demands, and more persistent, dogs him like his own shadow, and haunts him even in his dreams. "Life's enchanted cup" comes very near being an infernal poison, in the complexity of its brewing. Who shall guide the novice through the hurly-burly ? Ah, unless the guide himself be guided also, it will probably even then be but a leading of the blind by the blind. It was bad enough of old ; but in these days, with our multifarious interests, and passions as numerous as interests, a young man may grow old ere he has gone sedately through the programme of "experience" which the dear obsequious old Dame Fashion, with a humble smirk, presents to him upon her bended knee.

What effect has this riot of guides and petitioners upon the much-enduring youth who is their prey ? Well, unless he be heroic, it cannot but be prejudicial to his better self. He is driven to put himself upon a pedestal, and, more or less, join in the adoration which he fancies the rest of the world bestows upon him—with sufficient justification, indeed, he imagines. Down to the depths goes Modesty, with all her graces.

"A pretty creature, that, to want to fasten upon me," remarks the youth, as he sees her depart ; "but I reckon she won't trouble me again." It is little likely that she will ; and between ourselves, dear reader, the more is the pity.

This stage in the mutation of our hero brings us point-blank upon one other influence which might have done as much for him as the fascination of a noble woman. But now he has stepped out of its magic circle. He is of the outer, not the inner ring ; and it will be odd if ever he get among the happy ones again. Since he has learnt to love himself, Love the magician has lost her power over him. Under the sway of a genuine, all-absorbing, worthy, and inspiring passion for a woman of his own age or less, he might have lived in Elysium. Then, indeed, his time of life were the most felicitous possible for him. And if he could prolong his enthusiasm and his courtship throughout the entire term, he might almost be said to have exhausted the possibilities of human happiness. But

such rapture is not for him, as a rule. And so his early manhood has to find what pleasure it may in excitement, as a substitute for happiness, and in constant change, instead of the smiling contentment of tranquillity.

Next, take full manhood—from twenty-five to forty. Of course, not every man is a full man at twenty-five. On the other hand, at forty some men have achieved more than others. It is an average estimate, that is all.

My friend here was in no doubt of his opinion. "Hang out the banners" on this glorious era of a man's life! The earlier stage might have been the best; this later one holds as much certainty as that held doubt. "Why, the very consciousness of physical strength, sustained strength, is a joy beyond price." Upon this argument I fear he laid too much stress, even as the pauper is inclined to think nothing of a Paradise in which he might not play the part of Dives. Again: "The judgement is now at its keenest, out of question. The highest intellectual work is now done, or never. I will go further and say, that even the graces of men and women are now more winning than at any other time. A face may have lost its first freshness, but it has also lost the insipidity which only too often accompanies juvenile beauty. The 'tone' has come."

We debated over this claimant for a while. I was indisposed to be so enthusiastic as my companion. We were both biased; he by his sickness, and I by my ignorance. But the balance swung his way in the end. It seemed so assuredly better to be at work than about to begin to work; to have taken the plunge in all the other serious departments of a man's career, and breasted the more formidable of the waves of circumstance; to have tethered oneself by this faculty and that to a number of interests which cheer at the same time that they educate; to have accepted this or that theory of life and the world as a sound and satisfying basis upon which to build up hopes for oneself, and for those sweet doubles of oneself which, at this stage, blossom around one like rose-trees in June. It is the time to breathe fully, and to enjoy the consciousness that each inspiration is full and vigorous.

All this is obvious, and yet I was glad to have it recalled to my mind. However, for my part, I was still inclined to think that old age, or young old age presses the time of manhood somewhat closely in the

race for excellence. It is all the difference between being a spectator and an actor. The old have been actors; they have also the pleasure of remembering it. They are, moreover, spectators of the actions of others in whom they may, or may not, be personally interested. Their arena of entertainment is therefore certainly the largest.

The old are also notoriously strong in matters of judgement, even though their knees may be weak. What so pleasurable as to sit in the seat of the censor? Is a man ever too old for the bench? The longevity and the haleness of our more considerable lawyers is a convincing testimony to the advantageousness of their position. But every old man stands towards the community at large like a judge towards his criminals. Each year broadens his horizon, extends his pleasure and his pastime. Methuselah was a man immensely to be envied. What varied lore, what an endless series of graduated pictures he must have stored within him, as the centuries passed and left him high and dry among his pigmy fellow-men!

But nothing is easier, it may be said, than to cast together the evils which commonly wait upon old age, and thereby to prove that it is absurd to suppose that happiness can exist in the midst of them. Of course nothing is easier than to catalogue these possible afflictions; but, on the other hand, I contend with my betters, that happiness, contentment, or what you please to call the "summum bonum" we all strive for, is quite independent of most of these afflictions. The prudent person, when old, expects to be tried in this way. He is prepared, and that is half the battle. Nor must it be forgotten that even as his energies have waned with his increase of years, so also his body has changed into a condition well suited to bear physical trials which, in his youth, would have been insufferable. As a stripling he grumbled without ceasing when a toothache or a sprained ankle kept him within doors; as an octogenarian, the chair to which he is confined for a good many hours of the day, is to him by far the most comfortable place in all the world; nor would he exchange it for the Pope's throne, if the throne were only to be won by a journey to Roma.

But to recur to the moral aspect of the matter. Is it not a fact that a good man's goodness increases as he grows older? There is nothing in the world more

venerable and loveable than a good old man or woman. Surely that is much, for are not respect and affection just the two things for which we fight hardest during the fighting part of our career? And they may be acquired by the aged without effort!

"It is only older people, after all, who are quite unselfish, and feel the greatest pleasure in witnessing the happiness of others."

Miss Thackeray was very right when she wrote this. It constitutes the keenest joy of reverend old age: a joy to which the wild intoxicants, which in youth we call pleasures, are as nothing at all. It is almost impossible, made as we are, for the young to be disinterestedly happy in the happiness of others. Envy and jealousy are ever on the alert to mar such a divine possibility. But the old are doubly gladdened by the visible joy of others. They are generous enough to rejoice because others are profited. And—this is not cynicism—they often also find cause to congratulate themselves that their own snug tranquillity is not in peril of being disturbed by the like boisterous agents of felicity.

It is for their peace and resignation that I most admire the old. They have attained Nirvana. The world's game, confessedly not an unamusing one, is known to them. They are on the heights of Pisgah, whereas we are warring in the plain, or groaning in the valleys about the tedium of our days. The very features of life which weary us, delight them. What to us is but a roar

of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing . . .

is to them a symphony they never tire of hearing. The routine of life maddens us:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time.

They love each new day to be the precursor of the one that follows it, and the same as that it has come after. Passion is as dead within them as ambition. Even their antipathies grow daily less antipathetic. Death, whom one would suppose they regarded as their most bitter foe—feeling towards him like the ailing lamb towards the eagle hovering above—comes at length to be viewed by them as a friend. He has, indeed, made intimate acquaintance with so many of their contemporaries, that they may consider themselves on bowing terms with

him. It no longer troubles them very deeply to hear that such another of their friends has been "called away in the night." It is little more than the postman's knock next door. Maybe the knock will sound at their own doors ere they have begun to lament.

LONDON MONKERIES.

WHITEFRIARS, Greyfriars, Austinfriars, the Broad Sanctuary—London is full even now of reminders that it once was, in the mediæval sense, a most religious city, as befitting the capital of that nation which, some one says, "was the very paradise of monachism." Of London monkeries the West Minster was as old a foundation as any. Thorney Island, in the days of King Lucius, was a pleasant place; the Romans had built a temple there which Lucius had turned into a church. But when the heathen came in, amid "the vehement prancings of the wild white horse," much culture disappeared in many parts, and Thorney, amongst others, came to be as wild and wretched a spot as "The Five Fields," from Ebury Street to the river, were when I was a boy. But in 610, Sebert of Essex was baptized by Mellitus, Bishop of London, and built a grand church on the island; and while he doubted to what Saint to dedicate it, lo! there appeared to Edric, the fisherman, a vision.

A light shone on the Surrey shore, and when he made for it a venerable man bade him ferry him to the island. Landing there the stranger went to the church, and straightway a host of angels came down and formed a procession, holding candles, while he went through the form of consecration. This being finished he bade Edric tell Mellitus that the church was already consecrated to Peter the fisherman, and that by Peter himself; and, moreover, he counselled Edric not to fish on Sundays, and never to fail in paying to the Abbey the tithe of what he caught.

Next day Mellitus came with his following, and, led by Edric, saw the crosses marked with holy chrism on the doors and also the droppings of the angels' candles. Wherefore, marvelling greatly, he abstained from consecrating; and in memory of this miracle the tithe of Thames fish was paid to the Abbey for well-nigh eight hundred years; indeed, in 1230, the monks went to law with the Parson of Rother-

hithe for the tithe of salmon caught in his parish, alleging that Saint Peter himself had granted it to them. Of course the Danes destroyed Sebert's Abbey and his Palace hard by; what Abbey did they not destroy? And Eadgar rebuilt it in 958, as he rebuilt many others, only that it might be again destroyed by the same invaders. But a century later Edward the Confessor reared a splendid pile, hallowed to his mind by a vision of the Lord Himself, and by the grace vouchsafed to him, poor sinful King, that the Irish cripple whom he had taken on his shoulders at the roadside and had carried through the church and laid on the altar, received perfect soundness even as Peter had told him that he should. Edward, too, while in exile in Normandy had vowed to go on pilgrimage to Rome if ever he should be restored to his country. But when his nobles suffered him not, the Pope absolved him of his vow on condition of his adding an Abbey of Benedictines to the splendid church which he had already reared in Thorney. The Benedictines were the learned order; and it was meet that in their sacristy should have been set up the press of Caxton. What manner of church the Confessor's was is shown us on the Bayeux tapestry. They say it covered as much ground as the present Abbey, and was the first cross-formed church ever reared in England. Almost every successive King enriched it. Its boundaries stretched from York House (that is, Whitehall) to Chelsea and Kensington. Saint Martin's, then truly in the fields, was one of its parishes. It held the manors of Paddington, Hendon, and Hampstead. The Nunneries of Kilburn and Clerkenwell belonged to it. When it was surrendered to Henry the Eighth its income was close upon four thousand pounds; that is, at least thirty thousand pounds nowadays. At the dissolution, its Abbot, Benson, had not the stern spirit of the good Abbot of Glastonbury—hanged on the Tor that rises hard by his monastery—or of Prior Houghton, of the Charterhouse, who, with several of his monks, was put to death for contumacy. He bent to the storm, and for his reward was made Dean of the College founded in lieu of the Monastery, and, two years after, became Bishop of the short-lived see of Westminster.

But Protector Somerset was a far worse enemy to the Church than King Henry. He determined that Somerset House, which he was building, should be the grandest

palace in England, and therefore he planned to pull down the Abbey and give the stone to his workmen. Happily he was bought off with the gift of fourteen good manors, and indemnified himself by using the stones of the great Clerkenwell Priory of the Knights of Saint John, not one stone of which—the glorious church, with its exquisitely-proportioned tower (renowned throughout the island), and its richly-carved side chapel—did he leave on another, save the gateway, which still stands.

We could not have afforded to lose the Abbey, though its central tower was never finished, and the western towers are Wren's stone-mason's Gothic. Indeed, much of the exterior was refaced by Wren, the flowing tracery being pared down and replaced by the petty mouldings which distress and astonish those who are struck—as every one is—with the grand loftiness of the interior.

Not many people know that the Abbey is, after a sort, a rival of Madame Tussaud's. Over Abbot Islip's chapel—note his rebus: an eye, and a hand holding a slip of a plant—is a chamber containing the wax-work figures that used to be carried in procession when any Royalty was buried.

Till Henry the Fifth's time, Kings and Queens had been carried to the grave with faces uncovered—as young girls are now carried in Italy—that their liege subjects might see the last of them. But Henry the Fifth died in France, and had to be “lap't in lead,” before he was brought over. Of him, therefore, an effigy was made, and, to accompany it, effigies of several of his predecessors. The custom was kept up; and Stow's list contains every King and Queen from Edward the Third to Anne of Denmark.

Up to 1840 this waxwork was a regular show, General Monk's cap being sent round when a party had finished looking at it, and the money divided among the minor Canons. To see it now you want a special order from the Dean. The older figures are in shocking order—I suppose they are past “restoring”—the wax having peeled off the wooden frames. One ghastly shape, wearing a crown, is supposed to represent Queen Philippa. Among those comparatively perfect is Queen Elizabeth, a frightful witch, with crown, ruff, jewelled stomacher, etc. This figure was carried from Whitehall at her funeral. Mary, wife of William the Third, is nearly six feet high. The face was from a plaster cast. Anne is as fat as

her sister, but shorter, with long, flowing hair, carrying the orb and sceptre; her mistress of the robes, the Duchess of Richmond, has her favourite parrot; Lord Nelson, added when his tomb in the rival church began to be an attraction, wears authentic garments, except the coat, the original of which is at Greenwich.

There were two other Abbeys in London. One of these was Grace Abbey, or Eastminster, founded in East Smithfield by Edward the First, for that severer branch of Benedictines, the Cistercians of Saint Bernard. At the suppression, its annual income was returned at about five hundred and fifty pounds, including the manors of Gravesend and Poplar, and many more. Not a trace of it is to be found nowadays; and very little remains of the Cluniac Abbey of Saint John of Bermondsey, founded by Alwine Child in 1082, and enriched, for a wonder, by that enemy of monks, William Rufus.

In this Abbey, Katherine of Valois, widow of Henry the Fifth, was imprisoned for her love passages with Owen Tudor; and there, too, Elizabeth Woodville was shut up by her son-in-law, Henry the Seventh. Being a foreign foundation, it was suppressed when the great effort was made to nationalise the Church under Edward the Third in 1371; but, being useful to Royalty, was refounded in 1399 and made into an Abbey, John of Attleborough being first Abbot. Its last Abbot, yielding like Benson of Westminster, received in exchange the Bishopric of Saint Asaph's. Sir John Pope, founder of Trinity College, Oxford, got a grant of the land and buildings (the income was four hundred and eighty pounds), including "Savory's Dock" and the Abbey mill.

But the neighbourhood was still fashionable; and out of the Abbey stones Ratcliff, Earl of Sussex, built a mansion on the same site. If you ever take a walk through Bermondsey, remember that "Grange Walk," "Long Walk," etc., are faint memories of the farm and gardens of this very Royal foundation.

A Prior was a smaller man than an Abbot. When the latter was "mitred"—as at Saint Alban's and Bury—he sat with the Bishops in the House of Lords. He had sometimes as many as six chaplains—the Prior had only one—called monitors, for they told him all that went on inside the walls. He could consecrate churches. He could stay away from refectory and from

church—having his own chapel—except on feast days.

Such a costly personage was only found in the largest monasteries, which, therefore, were Abbeys. Of Priors, London had at least seven, of which the oldest was Saint Bartholomew's. Prior Rahere—"a man of low kynage," says Stow, "yet pleasant-witted, who had been minstrel to Henry the First"—founded it about 1120. Rahere (or Rayer) got tired of his life, and went on pilgrimage to Rome. On his way thither he had a vision. A great beast, with wings like to a dragon, caught him and carried him to a place whence he could see the mouth of the Pit, and them that therein were in torments. From the beast's clutches he was saved by an old man of goodly presence, who said: "I am Bartholomew; and when thou art home again thou shalt build a church in my name on ground which I will show thee." "But I am only a poor man," urged Rayer, "with no land or living." "Fear not," replied the Saint; "what is needful shall not fail thee." And, in truth, no sooner did Rayer begin to build, than miracles—in those days very gainful—began to show themselves. Cripples walked away upright; blind men got their sight; a mass-book, stolen by a Jew, was discovered to a child by an angel; and when Rayer died in 1143 he had a fine foundation of thirteen monks.

Probably he got his land cheap; for the site is described as "right unclean—a marsh, dungy and fenny, with water ever abounding," not at all like what one looks for at the top of Snow Hill, not very far from that "Panier Alley," off Paternoster Row, which an inscription claims is "the highest ground in all the City round." Rahere still lies in stone, gilt and painted, as such effigies used to be, in the choir of the church that he built. At his foot stands a crowned angel, and on either side kneels a monk, with Bible opened at Isaiah li 3: "The Lord shall make thy wilderness like Eden." He did not set this up; it is rich fifteenth century work—look at its grand canopy. His church is Norman, of course, and very fine of its kind, far finer than the "Round Church" at the Temple. The treatment it has received is disgraceful. What is left is only the choir and a fragment of the nave; and one remembers the workshops built into the transepts, etc. In no other city in Europe would such a splendid remnant of old times have been left in such a state,

when it had a claim not only on the Corporation, but the rich hospital connected with it.

There was a big row in this church not much more than a century after it was built. Eleanor, wife of Henry the Third, was too partial to her countrymen of Provence. Her uncle, Boniface, whom her influence had made Archbishop, was haughty and ill-conditioned. Once when he was visiting Saint Bartholomew's, he thought the sub-Prior showed him too little reverence; whereupon he rushed at him, slapped his face, tore up his cope and trampled on it, and having armour under his vestments, squeezed him so hard against a pillar that he almost pressed the life out of him. The monks supported their sub-Prior, and the Smithfield folks getting an inkling of what was going on, poured in, overpowered the Archbishop's suite, and pursued them with yells and hooting to Lambeth. The church is full of interesting tombs, specially noteworthy being a grand one of Sir Walter Mildmay, Elizabeth's Chancellor, founder of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. The Queen accused him of founding a Puritan College—which, indeed, it proved to be. "No, madam," he replied. "I have but set an acorn, which, when it becomes an oak, God knows what will be the fruit thereof." Not far off is Doctor Antony (1623), inventor of the Aurum Potabile, a universal remedy, which made his fortune—as universal remedies still do. He lived in grand style in Bartholomew's Close, not far from the old gate, from a scaffolding over which the Lord Mayor, the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Bedford, and Wriothesley—the Chancellor who, with his own hands, had already tortured her on the rack—watched in 1546 the burning of Anne Askew. The hospital was part of Rahere's foundation, of which the yearly income at the suppression was over six hundred and fifty pounds.

Somewhat older than Rahere's Priory was that founded for Austin Canons regular (that is, living by a rule) by Queen Maud, Henry the First's wife. This was at Aldgate, just within the walls. It was the first suppressed of all our religious houses; perhaps Henry the Eighth had a special grudge against it, for the Pope had made it a "peculiar," free of all jurisdiction, even the King's. In 1531 it was granted to Speaker (afterwards Lord Chancellor) Sir Thomas Audley, who left not one stone on another of its glorious church, though among the monuments

were those of King Stephen's son and daughter. Aldgate Pump covers the holy well of Saint Michael, in whose chapel, belonging to the Priory, the well was. The crypt of the chapel still exists under the pavement. They say it is very beautiful; surely it might be taken up and rebuilt in some place where it might be seen. The glory of Aldgate Priory was its peal of nine bells; its Prior was always Alderman of Portsoken—the soke of the gate.

A few years earlier—in 1106—was refounded for the same order of Augustinian Canons the old Abbey of St. Mary Overie. Stow tells how Mary, a ferry-woman, long before London Bridge was built, stored up her earnings to build a house of Sisters. Swithun, when he set up a timber bridge, turned this into a college for secular Canons. Its refounders were two Norman knights, Danney and Pont de l'Arche; and their buildings being burned about 1207, Peter de Rapiibus, Bishop of Winchester, rebuilt the whole with great splendour. It is his work which still remains in the beautiful Lady Chapel of what is now called St. Saviour's, Southwark. Among its many tombs, note the poet Gower's, and that of Dr. Lockyer the quack (temp. Charles the Second):

Till with all else at th' universal fire
This verse is lost, his *PILL* embalms him safe
To future times without an epitaph.

On Alderman Humble (1616) are Quarles's famous lines, beginning:

Like to the damask rose you see,
Or like the blossom on the tree.

Its income was about the same as that of Saint Bartholomew's; and a very small part of this was recovered in James the First's time to endow the parish school. The church had been already bought by the parish.

The Priory of the Knights of St. John, Clerkenwell, was founded by the same Baron de Bricet who founded Clerkenwell Nunnery. Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, consecrated the splendid church. Its yearly revenue was very nearly two thousand three hundred and ninety pounds; and (as I have said) Protector Somerset got hold of it, and (as usual) belied his title in his treatment of it. Bedlam, or Bethlehem in the Moor, was founded in 1246 for brethren and sisters by Sheriff Simon FitzMary. As it was outside Bishopsgate in the unhealthy Moor-fields, no one cared much for it. The City was allowed to buy, and the buildings were at once used for a mad-house. Monkwell Street keeps up

the memory of Elsing Priory, founded for Austin Canons in 1329, by Elsing, a mercer. At the dissolution the parishioners bought the church, St. Alphege's, the porch of which belongs to the original building. Its income at the suppression was less than two hundred pounds.

More important was the Charterhouse. It was founded in 1371 by Sir Walter Manny, of whom every boy has read in his Froissart, on a bit of waste called "No Man's Land," between the gardens of the Knights of Saint John and the lands of Saint Bartholomew's. This had been one of the burial-grounds during the Black Death, bought for the purpose and consecrated by Ralph of Strafford, Bishop of London. He built a chapel, and endowed perpetual masses for the fifty thousand who were buried in these three acres. It was the constancy of the Charterhouse monks and their Prior Houghton, which nerved Sir T. More to stand against Henry the Eighth. He had lived for some years in their community, though without taking vows; and when he watched them being taken to Tyburn: "Lo, dost not see, Meg?" he said to Mrs. Roper; "these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage." Besides those drawn and quartered, a batch of ten was starved to death in Newgate. At the suppression (the income being about six hundred and forty-two pounds) the Priory was given to Speaker Audley, and by him sold to North, who sold it to the Duke of Norfolk. He transformed it into a grand mansion, but by his son it was sold to Thomas Sutton, citizen and girdler, who had made a vast fortune in Northumberland coal. This first of successful coal merchants gave thirteen thousand pounds for it, and spent twenty thousand pounds in fitting it up for pensioners and scholars, endowing it besides with fifteen manors, yielding yearly four thousand five hundred pounds. Such a rich foundation was not allowed to pass unchallenged. James the First long refused letters patent; Bacon, though he wrote "The Advancement of Learning," backing him up as hard as he could; indeed, from 1611 to 1628, Sutton was uncertain whether what Fuller calls "the master-piece of English charity," would not be got hold of by the Crown. Washhouse or Poplar Court, and the cloisters, are parts of the old monastery.

But there is no space to go through half the London religious houses. The Friaries

have left their mark. Blackfriars had walls and gates of its own, and stretched from Mountfichet Tower to Baynard Castle, all which was out of the jurisdiction of the Mayor and Barons (Aldermen) of the City. Parliaments were held here; here was pronounced the divorce on Catherine; here lodged many lords and gentles all through Elizabeth's reign. Indeed, it would be curious to enquire how this big College for nobles, as the Dominican house had become, perished away. Greyfriars belonged to the Franciscans, another branch of the mediæval Salvation Army. Founded in the Shambles (the Franciscans always chose a poor, crowded part of a town) by mercer Ewin in 1225, it was much beautified by Margaret, wife of Edward the First. She was buried there, as well as other Queens and great people. The church was bought by the parish, but destroyed in the Fire. Crutched means crossed friars; they came over from Italy in 1244, and persuaded two citizens to house them in Hart Street by the Tower. Austinfriars, founded by Bohun, Earl of Hereford, in 1253, was the chosen burial-place of many noble families. When the Friary was granted to Paulet, Marquis of Winchester, the nave of the church was reserved, and, by Edward the Sixth, "given to the Dutch nation." Alas! the beautiful decorated windows that some of us remember are gone; it was burnt down a few years ago. Whitefriars belonged to the Carmelites, who claimed descent from Elijah and Elisha! Their sanctuary (afterwards called "Alsatia") held its privilege till 1697. The Friaries were poor. Monks could not hold personal property; but their monasteries might receive gifts. Friaries were bound to hold no more wealth than sufficed to maintain their members. Of Whitefriars, the income is given at twenty-six pounds; of Crutched Friars, fifty-two pounds; of Austin's, a few pounds more.

Of nunneries, besides that in Clerkenwell, as rich in architecture as its neighbour the Priory of Saint John, was the rich Abbey of poor Clares or Minorites, founded in 1293 by Edmund, Earl of Lancaster. From this the Minorites gets its name. Its income was over four hundred and eighteen pounds.

Nearly as valuable was St. Helen's Nunnery, in Bishopsgate; and there was another in Shoreditch dating from Richard the First.

London had, besides, divers colleges of

secular priests—ordinary clergy, not monks—Jesus College, close by Saint Laurence Poultney, founded by the Mayor of that name; Saint Mary's, on College Hill, founded by Whittington; Saint Martin's-le-Grand—so called because of its great sanctuary—it dated from 700 A.D.

Of guilds, too, there were many; among them Saint Katharine's—where are the Docks. The endowment gives some poor-rich ladies a pleasant home by the Regent's Park. This was founded by Stephen's wife, Matilda, and had within its precincts a sanctuary for apostate Jews. Its income was over three hundred and fifteen pounds.

Some of these guilds were boarding-houses, where one might live "in retreat" for a small payment yearly.

The Rolls' guild—now Rolls' Office—was for converted Jews; but was dissolved in 1377.

Knighten Guild, Aldgate, for knights tired of the world, dates from King Edgar.

Then there were hospitals: not only Bartholomew's, but Saint Thomas's, bought by the City from Henry at the suppression; Saint James's, for leprous maids, where is now Saint James's Palace; the Savoy, richest of all, save Bartholomew's, built on the site of the Lancastrian Palace ruined by Wat Tyler. The Temple, too, was a hospital; and so was Saint Giles's-in-the-Fields (for lepers).

London, we see, was not behind other cities in the number and riches of its religious and semi-religious houses. It would be interesting to go more fully into detail, and to trace out especially the pre-Norman foundations. The Guildhall Library has books enough on the subject.

A PRODIGAL SON.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

ON a rough night, during the Christmas Vacation, the Temple does not look the cheeriest place in the world. Its windows are dark and sombre, its gardens bleak and leafless. The wind rushes shrieking through its deserted courts and up its gloomy staircases. There is no sign of life to be seen, save the form of an occasional policeman who stands shivering in some sheltered doorway; or of comfort, save the little fire over which nods the drowsy old night-porter.

But the Temple, like everything else, should not be judged by appearances.

Even on the roughest of nights, and during the dearest of vacations, there are plenty of snug little spots in it. The staircases leading to them may be cold and gloomy, but there is no want of warmth and light within. Their windows may be dark and sombre-looking, but that is because the shutters are close and the curtains thick. The wind may shriek as fiercely as it likes about their walls; it may hurl itself as often as it pleases against their doors and windows; it may, like the sturdy and unmannered tramp it is, try its strength and ingenuity by turns to force an entrance and steal away a part of their comfort; but, secure behind closed oaks and drawn curtains, their owners can laugh at its fruitless efforts, and enjoy untroubled the cheerfulness it cannot disturb.

Old Serjeant Stronge was the fortunate possessor of one of the snuggest of these snug sets. It was high up in King's Bench Walk. On one side its windows opened out towards the gardens, on the other they overlooked the river. In summer the situation was pleasant and picturesque; but in winter, when the trees, like huge, fantastic skeletons, rattled their leafless branches in the wind, and when one heard, away in the distance, the surge and splash of the black, cold river as it rolled on in darkness towards the sea, it was weird and solitary enough.

But old Serjeant Stronge, as he cared little for the beauty of his chambers' situation in the summer, cared little for its weirdness in the winter. When the north wind rattled against his windows, he only drew his curtains closer; when the river moaned gloomily between its banks, he only stirred up the blazing fire. He was a hard, matter-of-fact man, who paid small attention to anything but his creature comforts, his pleadings, and his fee-book.

On this December evening, though the wind screamed and the snow flew without, he enjoyed untroubled the comfort about him. He sat in his easy-chair, in the old wainscoted room, before a roaring fire. On the table stood a reading-lamp, which threw a soft light over the floor, and by it was a decanter of rare port, from which, from time to time, he helped himself. The curtains were warm, the fire was bright, the wine was good; why should he care what the weather was like?

Indeed, Serjeant Stronge was in a particularly satisfied frame of mind that night, and he had two very good reasons for his satisfaction. The first was, with

regard to Michaelmas Term, which that day had ended. He had just totted up his receipts for the term, and the result was all that he could desire. Never before had his fee-book for the Autumn sittings made so fair a show.

The second reason for his satisfaction was that, that night his son Charlie was to come to him. The Serjeant was a widower, and Charlie was his only child. The lad was at Oxford, and as the Christmas Vacation had commenced, his father was expecting him at chambers to spend his holidays with him.

As he closed his fee-book the old lawyer smiled to himself with satisfaction.

"Yes," he muttered, "that's excellent! Fifteen hundred guineas in about seven weeks—that's capital! My income this year is close upon seven thousand—not bad for a man who, thirty years ago, was worth exactly nothing at all. I'm getting rich now. I'm more successful than even I had ever hoped to be. Hillo! what's that!"

This exclamation was due to the noise produced by a tremendous burst of wind. Serjeant Stronge went to the window, drew aside the curtains, and looked out.

"Hum!" he said, as he turned back to the fire. "That's a bad night for Charlie's home-coming. Well, well, he's young, strong, and well cared for; it shouldn't do him harm. When I was his age, though my coat was thin enough, Heaven knows, I wouldn't have cared a rush for it." Then he paused and reflected in silence for a moment. "Mrs. Aldridge!" he then cried out.

The laundress came in.

"Have you Master Charlie's room ready?" he asked her.

"Yes, sir," replied the laundress.

"A blazing fire, sheets well aired, and all that!"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, very well. I think you can go home now."

"Thank you, sir. Good night."

When the laundress had withdrawn, the old lawyer once more gave himself up to reflection.

"Yes," he said to himself, after a little pause, "it's just as well things are going well with me, or Charlie's demands would come rather heavy. Last year he spent plenty, in all conscience, but it was nothing to this year. Well, well, I suppose it can't be helped. When I sent him to Oxford, I told him to get into the best set there,

and he has done it, and living among them I suppose he must live like them."

Again the old lawyer relapsed into silence and reflection.

"Yes," he said again, after a long pause. "Yes, his intimacy with some of those young fellows should be of much service to him hereafter. Such friends as Lord Eustace Eustace, and the Hon. Fred Terrington, must be useful to a lad beginning life. Belonging to a good set at Oxford will bring him into a good set in London. What a start in life the boy has! Brought up at the best school and College in England, mixing as an equal with the sons of millionaires and noblemen, and backed by an income of thousands a year, what may he not aspire to! What might I not have been if I had had such a start! I began life without a shilling and without a friend, and here I am, at sixty, at the top of my profession, with a fortune saved and a seat in Parliament. What might I not have been if I had begun with education, position, and wealth to assist me! By heavens, I'd have been before this the first man in England!"

The Serjeant, in his excitement, rose to his feet and paced the room for some moments.

"Ah, well, well," he said, as he re-seated himself, "if I was too heavily handicapped to win the highest honours, Charlie will do that for me. In his path there are none of the obstacles which impeded me. All is open before him; he has only to go in and win. I have borne the burden and heat of the day. Ay, he little knows how heavy that burden was; how I have toiled, and struggled, and hoped when everything seemed against me, until my brain ached and my heart grew sick. Ah! it's no easy task for a poor, unlettered, friendless man to conquer learning and fortune. But I did it—did it by labour, suffering, and self-denial—and now to him I look for my reward. It is his part to win for our name the rank and honours that age is coming to prevent my winning."

After this little oration, Serjeant Stronge once more gave himself up to silent reflection. He had continued silent and motionless for some time, when another terrific blast attracted his attention.

"Well, this is a wild night!" he muttered. "It is nearly time Charlie was here—time altogether," he added, as he looked at the great old clock in the corner. "I wish he had arrived. There's no danger, I know; but still one cannot help

feeling just a little uneasy on such a night as this. I wish the boy had arrived."

Serjeant Stronge rose to his feet, and began to pace the room restlessly. He was feeling a little anxious. The time at which his son was to arrive had come, and as yet there was no sign of him.

He continued pacing the room for some time. Again he looked at the clock; it was now considerably past the appointed hour; but still there was no sign of the boy's coming. Every moment the Serjeant's uneasiness was becoming greater.

"What can be detaining him?" he exclaimed, anxiously. "I wonder can anything have happened to him? He is not, as a rule, unpunctual, and to-night, as he knows I'm awaiting him, he would be more than usually particular to be in time. I can't understand it. I wish he were here."

Just then another terrific blast struck against the windows, and made them rattle wildly in their firm sashes. It sent a shiver through Serjeant Stronge's frame, and filled him with an indefinite feeling of apprehension.

"I wish to goodness I knew where he is!" he said, despondingly.

He had scarcely spoken when he heard a knock at the door.

"Thank Heaven," he muttered, in a relieved tone; "there he is at last."

Hurrying away he opened the door. When he did so he stepped back in surprise. The person at the door was not his son Charlie, but his nephew, Jack Whyte.

"Why, Jack," the Serjeant exclaimed, angry at the disappointment, "what brings you here at this hour of the night?"

"Let me in, sir," answered Jack. "I have come about Charlie."

"About Charlie!" repeated the startled lawyer, turning very pale. "There's nothing wrong with him? He's not ill?"

"No, sir, he's not ill," replied Jack, uneasily. "Let me in, sir, and I'll tell you all about it."

Serjeant Stronge closed the door, and led the way into his cosy sitting-room. When Jack Whyte entered, he turned and faced him.

"Jack," he said, in a husky voice, "I see there is something wrong. What is it?"

Jack hesitated for a moment. He seemed half afraid to speak.

"Come, come, man," cried the old lawyer, angrily. "Out with it! Do you think I'm a woman or a child, that you can't trust yourself to tell me bad news?

Don't keep me in suspense. Let me know the worst. Is Charlie dead?"

"No, no, sir," said Jack Whyte, hastily, "it's not that—it's quite different. It's—it's——" and again he hesitated.

"Well, if it's not that," cried the Serjeant, "what under heaven is it? For God's sake tell me what has happened."

"Well, sir, it's about a servant-girl at 'The Mitre,'" said Jack Whyte, still speaking in an embarrassed way. "He has written to me to break the news to you." And Jack paused.

"What is the news?" asked the Serjeant, with a fearful calmness.

"Well, sir," Jack stumbled on, "it seems, sir, that he and she were——" again he paused.

"Go on," said the Serjeant, now ghastly pale.

"Were to be married this morning!"

The old lawyer gazed at Jack Whyte for a moment in silence. Then he sank into his easy-chair and covered his face with his hands. Thus he sat in silence for what seemed to Jack Whyte hours. At length he spoke.

"My God!" he muttered, "and this is the reward for all my labour, and suffering, and self-denial!"

CHAPTER II.

A YEAR had elapsed, and the anniversary of that eventful night was arrived. It was as bitter and boisterous as its predecessor. The wind screamed fiercely through the deserted courts and desolate gardens of the Temple; the snow flew wildly about in scattered flakes; the moon's face was distorted by the angry clouds which swept continually across it. All Nature seemed to be venting a long pent-up wrath upon a sinful world. Heaven help those who had no shelter for their heads that night!

Again Mr. Serjeant Stronge sat alone in his old chambers in King's Bench Walk; again everything about him bespoke ease and luxury. The fire danced and sparkled on the hearth; the lamp shed its soft light over the carpeted floor; the heavy curtains hid every token of the cold and misery without. But Mr. Serjeant Stronge was no longer the self-satisfied, prosperous gentleman he was a year ago. Even as he sat there in the subdued light of the shaded lamp, one could have seen care, disappointment, and discontent in every line of his stern, worn face.

In his hand was a letter, which he had read and read again. It was from Charlie, his son, on whom he had looked with such pride, and from whom he had expected such great things, only a year ago.

"DEAR FATHER," it ran, "this is the anniversary of that morning when I committed the sin against you for which it seems there is no forgiveness. Since you then disowned me, the sorrow and suffering I have gone through no tongue can tell. My miseries have now reached a climax. Foodless myself for days, my hapless wife and innocent child are now languishing for want of bread. I cannot and will not bear it any longer.

"I do not ask for your forgiveness for myself—I know it would be useless to do so; but what I do ask and demand is, that you shall save my poor wife and child from starvation. If I cannot get that from your love, I will wring it from your shame.

"If I do not receive any reply to this to-day, to-night I will call at King's Bench Walk. Then if you still refuse me, by the Heaven that will judge us both, neither you nor any other man shall ever again have a chance of granting or refusing me anything! For Heaven's sake, father, do not drive your own child to a desperate death.—Your unfortunate Son, CHARLIE."

As the old lawyer read this letter for the twentieth time, he crushed it up in his hand and flung it into the waste basket.

"The fool!" he said, bitterly; "he thinks to intimidate me by his threats! Me! He should have known me better before this. Fear of anything man can do never yet turned me from my path. Even if I thought him capable of doing as he says, what do I care? But, if he does not know me, I know him. He give up his precious life! Pah! The braggart, the weakling—he was always fond of acting."

Striving to work up his rage and contempt, Serjeant Stronge rose to his feet and walked up and down the room.

"And he'll come here to-night, will he?" he said, as he walked. "I think he should be tired of that trick by this time! How many times has he knocked at my door here and in Pump Court, and what has he ever gained but insult and rebuffs? What a pitiful creature he is! Always whining that he is starving, and that his scullery-maid and her brat are starving too! Why, if he were more of a man I might pity him, but—pah—his spiritlessness disgusts me as much as his marriage. If I had

been in his shoes, would I have begged and snivelled? No, never! I should have worked—worked like the man I am—and made my way in the world without a human being's aid. That's what I did do, and see what I am now, and what—oh, Heaven—what I should have made him if he would only have let me!"

And the old lawyer flung himself with a sob into his chair; and groaned over the ruin of his hopes, the baulking of his life's ambition!

He sat there silently for a long time gazing into the fire, and thinking over again and again the things that might have been, and the things that were. What hopes, what high hopes and soaring ambitions had once been his, and how this foolish lad, in a single moment, had wrecked and blasted them all for ever! How vain are human wishes and human foresight, when all the work and plans of a wise and strong man's life can be brought to nothing by the folly of a boy!

He sat there for a long time thinking, not sadly so much as fiercely and furiously. Then he roused himself with a start, and looked at the great old clock in the corner.

"It's getting late," he muttered. "He will be here soon. What shall I do? Open to his knock, and bid him begone? Or let him knock and knock, and depart unanswered?"

He sat silently thinking which course he should adopt. Suddenly his meditations were interrupted.

"Tap, tap, tap!" sounded with startling abruptness on the outside door.

The old lawyer was taken off his guard, and started violently at the sound. His son had arrived before he was expected.

Sitting erect in his chair, Serjeant Stronge felt for once in his life irresolute. Should he see his son, or should he not? What would he say or do if he did see him? And if he did not see him, what would happen then?

A struggle was going on in Serjeant Stronge's mind; a struggle, though he might not have admitted it, between anger and love, between resentment and pity. In spite of all his hard thought and harder language about his boy, just then it was an even chance whether he should forgive him or not.

Unfortunately—as often happens in the most serious of human affairs—the event was decided by an accident. Charlie Stronge only knocked once at his father's

door—he waited but a minute. Then, hopeless apparently of an answer, he turned, and, with a broken heart, went slowly down the long stairs. If he had but knocked twice, if he had waited only a moment more—who can say what way the terrible struggle in his father's breast might have gone? As it was, the event was decided before that struggle had come to an end.

Eagerly, breathlessly the old lawyer listened to the young man's heavy footsteps as they resounded on the boarded steps. Tramp, tramp, slowly and sadly the sounds came up to him; faint and more faint they gradually became; now they came from the second landing; now from the first; now they ceased.

As the echo of the last footstep died away, the great old clock in the corner chimed out the hour loud and clear. It struck ten.

Recalled to himself by the sound, the old lawyer, with a gasp, threw himself back in his chair, and realised that an issue perhaps of life and death had been decided for ever.

"Let him go," he said to himself, after a pause. "Let him go; he'll do himself no ill. I dare say he'll be back again to-morrow."

Though he said this for his own comfort, he felt no assurance that it would prove true. He knew that his son was in desperate straits—he knew that he had attained the very limits of human misery; and though he believed that he was of a weak and irresolute nature, still he felt that it was just weak and irresolute natures that were the most ready to resort to fearful measures when in dire distress. The strong man hopes against hope, and struggles against fate itself; the weak one gives up the contest soon, and abandons himself to a hopeless and reckless despair.

These reflections now pressed on the old lawyer's mind with fearful weight. What if Charlie did as he had threatened, and took away his life? That dreadful question stuck in his mind. It would not go away; it would give him no peace, no rest. Do what he would, there it remained at the door of his conscience, knocking, knocking continually, and imperiously demanding an answer.

Now that the supreme trial of his determination had come, it broke completely down. All the old deep love of his hand-

some, dashing boy came rushing back upon him. Visions of what he had been appeared before his aching memory. He remembered him as a pretty, prattling child by his dead mother's knee—that loved and lost one whom the old lawyer had cherished and mourned for with all the energy of his fierce, strong soul—; as the little laughing schoolboy who used to brighten everything around him by the sunshine of his presence; as the lad setting out for Oxford full of anticipations of pleasure and success, full of the exultant, intoxicating spirit of youth. And to think that, perhaps, at that very moment the black waters of the Thames rolled over that youthful face, over those glancing eyes, now closed and dull in death—the thought was agonising, maddening!

Torn by sorrow, remorse, and shame, the unhappy old man spent the night wandering aimlessly about the room, and sitting in his easy-chair, gazing into the dull embers on the hearth. For him there was no rest or sleep that night; and when the wintry morning broke, it showed his face—that but the previous day had been full of a high, indomitable spirit—weak and nervous as a frightened child's.

Dawn was slowly brightening into day, when the old lawyer's excited ear caught the sound of footsteps slowly ascending. At length they reached the Serjeant's floor. A knock! It is at his door. Was it Charlie? or was it—

Almost fainting with a fearful apprehension, the old lawyer staggered along the corridor to the door. He opened it. A policeman was there.

"Serjeant Stronge, sir?" he said, touching his helmet.

"Yes," answered the Serjeant, hoarsely.

"Begging your pardon, sir," said the policeman, "for disturbing you, sir—"

"What is it?" asked the old lawyer, now almost unable to stand with faintness.

"Well, sir, we found this on the body of a young man found in the river, and we thought you might know something of him."

He handed the Serjeant a slip of paper. Steadying his trembling form against the lintel of the door, the old lawyer examined it. There he found these words scribbled in his son's hand:

"Mr. Serjeant Stronge, King's Bench Walk. I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called his son."

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Consett," etc.*

CHAPTER VI. MISS KATE'S MARRIAGE

I HAVE to go back to my diary again to look up that time of Miss Kate's return.

I find that the Court was renovated and the rooms refurnished, and the grounds all done up; that horses were once more in the stables and carriages in the coach-house, and that it was all in honour of the young heiress.

Sir Rupert brought her home, and I was surprised to see how much older he looked, and what a haggard, careworn expression his face often wore.

As for my young lady, she was very little altered. Perhaps she was not quite so pretty as I used to think. She was very slight, and I suppose what one would call "medium height;" but one could only think of her as "little." She had such pretty hands and feet, such a pretty way of carrying her dainty little head; such a multitude of expressions that her face was always a sort of surprise; and such "ways"—I can call them nothing else—changeable, wilful, coaxing, impulsive, passionate; but every mood had its charm. And she now had suitors enough to try her caprices on.

I don't think she cared for any one. But she was a wicked little flirt, and no mistake. I suppose she couldn't help it. It was just inborn in her—an inheritance, probably, from that impulsive Southern-born mother she had never known.

The suitor who seemed the most eligible—if not externally the most attractive—

was a Mr. Carruthers, of Templecombe, a place some two miles further north than Dayrell Court.

He was much older than Miss Kate; but so a husband ought to be for any girl as wilful and impulsive as she was. He was very good and very kind-hearted; besides, he was enormously rich, and of unexceptionable birth and position, and worshipped my young lady with all his true, brave, honest soul.

Sir Rupert, I could see, was very anxious that the match should take place; but as for Miss Kate herself, she wasn't an atom in love with Mr. Carruthers, though I could see she liked him very much, and treated him far better than she did any of her other suitors.

She held him on and off for a long time. I often wondered whether she would marry him in the end; but I doubted it. However, circumstances often force people to commit certain actions which they never thought of committing, and I shall never forget what brought Miss Kate's marriage about.

I never rightly understood Mr. Vining's will; but I knew that she had a large fortune to inherit when she was twenty-one. The poor old gentleman never thought of appointing trustees, but left Sir Rupert to invest and manage it all. Well, to make a long story short, when Miss Kate was eighteen she learnt that this precious father of hers had been making ducks and drakes of her money.

He told her quite coolly—and told her, too, that the best thing she could do was to marry John Carruthers, and then she would never feel the miss of her fortune at all.

Poor Miss Kate. What a fury she was in that night! How she paced that room,

and stormed, and raved, and vowed she would go and be a governess at her old school, and never speak to Sir Rupert again; and then, just as of old, burst into sobs and tears and cried herself broken-heartedly to sleep in my arms.

From that day she changed very much. Perhaps it was that first shock which planted doubt and suspicion where all had been trust and faith. Perhaps it was the feeling that her father had never loved her as the poor old tender-hearted man had loved her, who was lying at rest now under the grasses of the quiet Richmond cemetery.

She became colder, harder, less impulsive. Sometimes she would sit for hours in the garden—a book on her lap—her hands listlessly folded, but her eyes staring up at the blue sky and the dancing leaves, as if her thoughts were hundreds of miles away.

It was one day, while she was sitting thus in one of her favourite haunts in the park, that Mr. Carruthers saw her, and at last spoke out.

Of course I don't know what he said, or what arguments he used, or how he tamed the little wild, capricious creature who had tortured him so long. I only know that she came back to the house, subdued, quiet, thoughtful; that Mr. Carruthers had a short talk with Sir Rupert in the library, and came out radiant and looking ten years younger in his pride and joy. And then it leaked out, and we all knew, and that night Miss Kate told me she had decided to marry him because he was so good and kind.

"I feel as if I could trust him with my life," she said, "and that I shall be safe and happy; and after all, Jane, that is what marriage ought to be. I used to think a great deal about love and romance, you know, but it seems great nonsense now. Sentiment is all very well for poets, and painters, and great geniuses, who look at life quite differently to what ordinary-minded people do; and that is what I am."

Ordinary-minded! Oh, Miss Kate, Miss Kate! As I looked at the wistful face, the dark glowing eyes, the little mobile mouth, I almost laughed.

"My dear," I said, "let me beg of you not to decide hurriedly. You are so young, and life is a long road to walk when one walks it with weary feet and has nothing to look forward to. I know that Mr. Carruthers is a good and noble man, and

loves you devotedly, but how about yourself? You are very young. You don't know the strength of your own heart, your own feelings. Oh, wait, Miss Kate, and think well before you take such a step."

She shook her head. "There is no use in waiting, Jane," she said. "I have promised to marry him; the sooner it is over the better. If I stay here much longer I shall quarrel with Sir Rupert to a certainty. I despise him with all my heart. My poor mother; I don't wonder she was unhappy."

Then she laughed.

"Don't be such a solemn old Jane," she said. "Just as if one couldn't shape one's life as one wishes. I mean to be happy, and I am sure I shall. I have always been petted, spoilt, adored, you know; and John Carruthers is just the sort of man to keep on worshipping. Besides, it is much better to be loved than to love; and love—that wild, adoring, passionate, jealous, miserable nonsense one reads of in books—isn't in my line at all. I have had fancies innumerable, but never really cared for any man as I do for my dear old John. And I mean to marry him, and make him a good wife, too. So don't croak any more to me, because you are only wasting your time!"

She laughed, and kissed me, and shook her lovely soft hair about her shoulders for me to brush; but I thought there was something a little dim and wistful in the brown eyes as they looked into the mirror, and the pretty face was paler and graver than I cared to see.

"She doesn't know herself yet," I thought, as I parted the silken mass, and gently smoothed its tangled waves. "Not love—with those eyes, with that passionate, impulsive heart! Oh! if she wakes one day to find out her mistake; if, too late, she learns what love can be to a woman!"

But I said no more, for I saw that her mind was made up, and I could only pray that she might be happy in those strong and loving arms, that would soon be all she had to trust and look to for protection and shelter. Still, I could not help a sort of foreboding that came over me, and a fear that she had made a mistake—not in her choice of a husband, but in her estimate of her own capabilities as a wife.

Mr. Carruthers was an impatient lover. Well, he was close on his fortieth year, and Miss Kate was but eighteen; so I was not surprised to hear that they were to be married in two months' time.

It meant great changes. It meant that the Court was again to go back to its desolate dreariness—that horses, and carriages, and servants were again to be dismissed; that I was to lose my fifty pounds a year, and give up my young mistress' service, for Tom had decided to go to London, and insisted on my going also.

I had long since learnt that my marriage had been a mistake, but I knew I must make the best of it. If one has to carry about an aching heart, I think it is better to be a working woman than a lady. The lady must sit with folded hands, or go about among idle, chattering folks, and pretend to be joyous and lighthearted; but the other has to toil and labour, and scrub and sew, and cook and contrive, if only to keep body and soul together, and has little time for the luxury of thought, and the selfishness of sorrow.

I had a very hard time of it in London, for Tom was fast turning an idler and a drunkard, and, do what I might, I could not prevail upon him to stick to work when he got it.

He treated me worse and worse, and I fell into bad health, and for a time had to go into a hospital. When I got out and went home—if a wretched garret in an East-end street can be called home—I found that he had sold off every stick of furniture, and taken himself off goodness knows where. The only thing left was my trunk, containing a few clothes and books.

I could not believe for long that he had been so heartless; but there, when a man or woman takes to drink, there's not much morality left in them, as I've found out by experience. I did what I could for myself—washing and charring, and such like. Of course I might have appealed to Miss Kate and asked her to help me; but somehow I preferred to be independent, and work for my own living.

And this was how I came to be a caretaker, and to come across such odd people and experiences that it struck me that one day I might just as well write them all down, and see if they wouldn't make a story, of which Miss Kate forms the beginning, the centre, and the end; for it is most curious the way her life and mine kept crossing, and how, in her hour of greatest trouble—but there, I'm running on again, and so I must pull myself up and give a coherent account of my new start in life.

CHAPTER VII. THE SUICIDE.

It was through doing charring for Mr. Jefferson, a house-agent in Islington—or, rather, for his wife—that I first got a start as caretaker. He, of course, had a great deal to do with letting houses; and sometimes they would be going all to rack and ruin for want of a little care and attention, in the way of lighting fires and airing rooms. Sometimes he'd get a policeman and his wife to stay in the basements and look after them; and I'm sure I don't know what made him think of me, unless it was through his wife, who was very kind indeed to me, and knew something of my troubles. At all events, he asked me if I'd take care of a house in Stuart Terrace until it was let, and as the terms were liberal, and I should have a room rent-free, I jumped at the offer.

Mrs. Jefferson sent in some furniture for me, and, though I felt terribly lonely at first, I soon grew used to it.

What odd people used to come to see that house! And I wonder how many times I've had to trot up and down from basement to attic after them, and answer all sorts of idiotic questions, and then hear them say that they didn't like the neighbourhood, or that the rent didn't suit. Just as if these were not the very points they should have considered before coming to look at the house at all!

One winter afternoon, just as it was getting dusk, a carriage drove up, and I went to open the door, and found two ladies standing there who said they wished to see the house. So I lit the gas, and began the usual business of opening doors and showing rooms. They were quiet, pleasant-spoken ladies—sisters, and unmarried. The eldest, however, had a queer, nervous look about her which I didn't much like. Her sister told me that their guardian had lately died, and that it had been a great shock to them, as they had now to look out for a house, and manage their own affairs, which they had never done before.

Their name was Martin—the Misses Martin. Well, they seemed to like the house very much, and drove straight from there to Mr. Jefferson's, which wasn't far off, and the next day they came again and said they would take it. I was to stop until they came in, and see that the workmen did the place up, and arrange the rooms and the furniture. I must say they were very generous and very considerate; and for the next month I saw a good deal

of them, and got to like them very much. Perhaps Mrs. Jefferson told them something about me, or they thought that, having been in service once, I shouldn't mind it again. But at last Miss Sophy, the younger, said she wanted a steady, useful, and trustworthy person to attend on her sister, and that I would just suit. Of course I accepted. I was only too glad of the chance, and having provided myself with two new gowns and some plain muslin caps and aprons, I was pleased to see that my hard life and worries hadn't yet turned me into the snuffy-looking, shabby, down-at-heel creature who is the usual type of char-woman, and caretaker.

At last the rooms were finished. Very nice they looked, and then the furniture began to arrive.

I must say I stared when I saw the enormous vans and the style of furniture that the men began to unload. Why, the pier-glasses, the sideboard, the cabinets and couches, the great four-poster beds, would have suited some Hyde Park mansion instead of this little terrace house.

Everything was on a large and grand scale, and no wonder, considering they'd come from a beautiful large house at Highbury, where the guardian of the two ladies had lived.

The men swore and grumbled because nothing would fit, and it was impossible to make them. So they stood the glasses up against the wall, and piled the pictures on the floor, and I had just got one room straight, with tables and chairs, when they took themselves off and said they would come next day.

I must say the place seemed even more dismal than when it was empty, and, as the short winter day drew on, the great packing cases looked ghastly in the gloom; and the huge, unwieldy pieces of furniture had a dreary and dejected appearance as if they knew they had no right there and didn't suit the place, and were sorry to be in it.

About six o'clock, when I was having some tea in the kitchen, the front door bell rang, and I ran upstairs and found Miss Martin there by herself. She had evidently driven up in a cab, as I saw one going off round the corner.

"Well, Jane," she said, "I suppose the furniture has come?"

She walked into the hall as she spoke and looked round. I followed her and opened the door of the dining-room.

"I'm afraid, Miss Martin," I said, "that

you'll have some trouble about making the furniture fit these small rooms. It has evidently come from a much larger house, and the men declare they can't get the sideboard in at all."

To my unutterable surprise, she sat down on one of the chairs and burst into tears in a weak, silly way, like a child.

"It was his sideboard," she cried. "I must have it. I can't live without seeing it every day. Tell them it must go here; it must. You are all alike. Sophy is just the same—waiting to thwart and disappoint me. He was the only one who ever loved me and understood me—and now he has gone, and no one cares, and no one does anything I wish."

I stared at her. Indeed, I thought she was extremely foolish for a grown-up woman, and hardly knew what to say. After a while she dried her tears and began to look about; but she soon commenced to cry again, for nothing was as she wanted it, and it was no use telling her it couldn't be done. She was as obstinate and as impracticable as a spoilt child. "It had been so before; it must be so again." That was the burden of her talk for a good hour or more, and I was fairly losing my patience when I heard another cab drive up, and Miss Sophy appeared.

She looked a little alarmed, I thought, as she jumped out and asked if her sister was there; and then she came in, and in a little while persuaded her to leave and go home, promising that they should both come back the first thing in the morning, and insist on the workmen doing what she wished.

Presently she drew me aside:

"I must tell you, Jane," she said, "that my sister was going to marry our guardian when he took that sudden illness, and died. It was a terrible shock to her, and threw her into this melancholy, depressed condition you now see. The doctors say that patience and change of scene will bring her round again, so you must try and put up with her. You have known trials and troubles yourself, that was why I wished to engage you if possible. But it is only right to tell you the facts of the case."

Dear Miss Sophy! If there ever was an angel upon earth, it was she; so gentle, so patient, so forbearing—and a hard time I'm sure she had of it. Miss Martin had all the money, and was so jealous of her authority and powers of management, that she made Miss Sophy come to her for

everything, and only paid her a quarterly allowance for clothing—just like a school-girl. But Miss Sophy managed her with such tact, that she never seemed to know how the real working of the household went on.

It was a full week before that furniture was put straight, and then it looked all out of place and proportion; and if they didn't cut a hole in the dining-room ceiling for the top part of that sideboard to fit, and most ridiculous it looked. But Miss Martin was delighted.

So long as she had it in the room she didn't seem to care; and she always kept the keys herself, and would let no one else fetch anything out of it.

I suppose I had been about three months in their service, when I began to see that there was something decidedly queer about my mistress. Sometimes she was in wild spirits—almost too boisterous and excited to be pleasant—at others so melancholy and depressed that it made one quite wretched to see her.

Poor Miss Sophy—she was deeply distressed about her sister, and far too innocent and good to suspect the cause. Indeed, for a long time, I never guessed what it was until one evening, in the kitchen, cook made a remark that opened my eyes.

"Have you any idea, Jane," she said, "how so many empty brandy-bottles get into the bottle cupboard?"

"No," I said. "Brandy! Why, they rarely have any upstairs. What do you mean?"

"Just come and look," she said, and she took me up to the cupboard where all the bottles were kept; and there, true enough, were piled dozens, I should think, among the empty clarets and sherries which were always taken down after being decanted.

I was fairly puzzled. The two ladies took so little wine, and very rarely had any one to dinner.

I looked at cook. There was something significant in her eye.

"Can't you guess?" she said. "Why, I hadn't been here a week before I had my suspicions. Look at missus in the morning; her eyes; the way her hand shakes; the dislike she has to breakfast; her irritability; her fits of melancholy. She's drinking herself, secretly, to death—that's what she's doing."

I felt cold and sick as I heard those words. It was the first time I had ever heard of women—ladies born and bred with no shadow of an excuse for it—

indulging in the vice of intemperance. Alas! I know now how fatally common it is, and what misery and wretchedness has come of it to many a hearth and home.

The worst of it is, as I've heard doctors say over and over again, that it's utterly impossible to reclaim women once they take to drink. Men, sometimes, do give it up and get over it; women, never.

Having once had my eyes opened to the reasons of Miss Martin's strange behaviour, and curious fits of excitement and depression, I naturally watched her more carefully. I suppose she got the brandy at different shops when she went out, for the bottles seldom had the same label, and never came from their own wine-merchant. As I watched her, it became clear to me that Miss Martin was growing steadily worse. The fits of morbid and hysterical depression were more frequent, and she began to have all sorts of curious delusions. One was, that she was very poor and that they must cut down expenses. It was no good for Miss Sophy to talk to her; she only got into a temper, and would work herself into a perfect frenzy sometimes, and frighten the gentle, timid younger sister nearly out of her senses.

She gave up the carriage, and only kept cook and myself, and whenever a bill came in, always declared she should be ruined, and made the most awful fuss over it; and yet day by day there would go five or six shillings for that hateful brandy, and she would steal down at night with the empty bottles and hide them away in that cupboard, and imagine, I suppose, that we were all such fools that we thought they grew and multiplied of their own accord.

If it hadn't been for Miss Sophy I don't think I could have stayed on, I took such a dislike to Miss Martin, and I so hated the sly, secret way she went about her actions, and the life she led that sweet, patient sister. But I put up with it for six months, when a sudden end came to the whole affair.

One summer evening cook was upstairs dressing, and I came into the kitchen to get some hot water. As I opened the door I found that something—a weight as of a heavy figure—lay behind, and prevented it going back. I felt a little bit nervous and queer.

"Gracious!" I thought, "if it's Miss Martin!"

I held the handle in my hand and stood there in the passage, hesitating as to

whether I should force the door back or not, when suddenly I felt a damp, cold sensation in my foot. I looked, and, to my horror, saw that I was standing in a pool of blood that was trickling from under the door. Then I was scared. I ran up the stairs and straight to cook's room and told her, and she turned as white as a sheet; but I couldn't induce her to come down and see what had happened.

"You'd better tell Miss Sophy," she said.

And so at last I went to the drawing-room and said I was afraid something had happened, and would she like to come down and see for herself. Poor thing, she looked at me so pitifully.

"Oh, Jane," she said very low and frightened, "is it—is it my sister?"

And I said: "Yes, miss. I'm afraid she's hurt herself."

Well, she summoned up courage, and we went downstairs. It was still quite light in the passage, and there was that dreadful dark stream flowing silently, slowly, along over the white stones.

We tried to get the door open; but it was very difficult, for we were terribly afraid of hurting Miss Martin, who seemed to be lying right across the entrance. At last there was space enough for me to squeeze through; but, oh! I shall never forget to my dying day the horrible sight; for there lay my mistress, stretched across the floor, and the light from the fire fell right across her white face and her glazed eyes, and on the carving-knife still clenched in her right hand.

She was stone dead, and her throat was cut from ear to ear.

SHANGHAI, FROM A BEDROOM WINDOW.

My bedroom window in the Hôtel des Colonies, Shanghai, is an excellent post of observation. The large French doors can be thrown back, and an easy-chair placed so as to command the street below. It is not a wide thoroughfare, nor yet a pretty one, but one in much request. It is one of those cross streets which lead directly into the Chinese quarter from the river frontage—the wide and picturesque Yang-tse Road, where most of the European places of business are situated. Another busy street cuts it at right angles just above the hotel, and from my window I obtain a good view and down both.

I have not to sit long before my interest is aroused. The Jinricksha men are the most prominent feature in the street below. The Jinricksha—colloquially, ricksha—is something like a miniature dog-cart, capable of holding only one, and pulled by a man instead of a horse. It is at once the Chinese cab, omnibus, and tram in one. A long line of these rickshas and their drivers stretches from the hotel down the road in a kind of extended sandwich of men and vehicles. The men are uninteresting in appearance, and lounge about in the most indifferent fashion. At a casual glance they appear lazy and unenergetic, though really they are nothing of the kind. I could not help noticing one fellow, clad in a dirty garment, like a superannuated horse-rug, and with a pair of brown, knotted legs, innocent of any covering whatsoever. He looked such an idle vagabond, and loafed about with such an expression of vacant indifference on his face, that I could not help taking particular notice of him. First he seated himself lazily on the shafts of his ricksha, then he rose and leant against the wall, so as to yawn more at his ease. Then he scratched his head placidly, and glanced three or four times up and down the street. Nothing of interest meeting his gaze, he yawned again, expectorated on the pavement, and commenced scratching one leg with the toe of the other. After a moment or two he sat himself down on the pavement, threw a stone feebly at a passing dog, yawned again, and set up a low whistle. But at that moment a European happened to come out of the hotel, and beckoned for a ricksha. Quicker than the greasiest of any greased lightning that ever flashed, my ricksha man harnessed himself to his vehicle, and with one gigantic bound, projected himself across the street. He was before all the others, and deservedly secured the prize.

The competition between these men is very great, and their anxiety to gain a fare astonishing. A European has only to appear at the entrance of the hotel, and a cloud of rickshas and their drivers hovers round in excited competition. When one walks away, it is with an escort of half-a-dozen. There was one man in a green coat who followed my companion and myself about pertinaciously, watching our every movement with hungry eyes, and seemingly resolved to gain our patronage at any cost. He was a veritable shadow to both of us; he haunted us; he filled our cup of enjoy-

ment with bitterness. If we stopped a moment, undecided which way to turn, down he would swoop upon us and offer his services with discomposing intensity; if my companion pointed out to me some particular building or subject, the man in the dirty green coat would take it as a signal, and bear down upon us with a wild whoop of triumph. We were afraid to cough, to wink, to raise a finger, for every time we did so the ricksha man would gather himself up and swoop down upon us with an indomitable perseverance that was maddening.

We tried to dodge him round corners, to distance him by speed; but all to no purpose. We remonstrated with him, we even went so far as to swear at him; but to everything he replied in the same strain, "Wantchee ricksha!" But at last we found a method of tiring out even his pertinacity. We took not the slightest notice of him whatsoever. We indulged in unrestrained gesture and animated conversation, and when he came bearing down upon us, acted as though there was no such thing as a ricksha man in a disreputable green coat in existence.

We looked through him and over him; trod on the shafts of his vehicle when he put them in our way, and when he uttered his unchanging formula, assumed a vacant expression of countenance, and pretended not to hear. We regarded the prospect through him, and flourished our sticks in dangerous proximity to his person, as though unaware of his presence. It was a hard, hard struggle, but we conquered in the end. Time after time he essayed to make a stand against our fridity, but in vain; and finally, after making a last effort, stood and cursed us with all the bitterness of defeat, and turned his back upon us for ever.

Another class of men, who devote their energies to the conveyance of the public, can be seen passing to and fro all day long beneath my bedroom window. These are the wheelbarrow-men, peculiar to the north, and not found in Southern China. Their vehicle is a curious contrivance—a species of heavy wheelbarrow with a raised centre. It is something like a miniature one-wheeled Irish jaunting-car, pushed from behind by a man instead of being pulled by a horse. The raised centre serves as a back, the body of the barrow being the seat; the occupants sitting back to back. These vehicles are mostly patronised by the poorer classes; the fare being very cheap. Exceedingly

clumsy in appearance, they jolt most terribly, and squeak as they move on at a snail's pace; but notwithstanding this, they are largely patronised by the Chinese.

The coolies, carrying burthens at either end of a stout bamboo pole, constitute another class which constantly attracts my attention. Their name is legion, and their burthens are legion. It is astonishing what a weight a Chinaman can carry on his shoulder, and what a diversity of articles. Building stone, bricks, tea, rice, boxes of all sorts, water, articles for sale, packing-cases—all is fish that comes to the coolie's net. The bearers trot along with their peculiar shuffle, constantly crying out their notes of warning to the passers-by, apparently unconscious that they are performing feats which a very Hercules might hesitate to attempt. Now a long string of ten or twelve comes by in Indian file, laden, perhaps, with rice, each one with an ordinary pack-horse's load. Now half-a-dozen, harnessed to a huge block of granite, struggle past, toiling and straining like so many working bullocks. Now a heap of light cargo—boxes, paper-lanterns, or something of the kind—comes bobbing along with an invisible man attached—as evidenced by a voice sounding hollowly from the midst of the load. Then there staggers by a man laden with long bars of iron and steel for the blacksmith, clanking dismally like Marley's ghost, and knocks the end of his load against the ricksha, whose owner is temporarily engaged in witnessing a dog-fight. Some of the paint is scraped off, and then there ensues a partial stoppage and a sudden babel of voices, until a native policeman happens to loaf by, when peace reigns once again.

The bamboo is a cherished possession of the Chinese—an ordinary coolie without one would be a hollow mockery. Although perhaps not in actual use, he always has one with him ready for emergencies; and if by some extraordinary chance he has not, and one should be required, give him ten seconds, and from some unknown source he will procure an assortment of twenty.

These coolies who carry burthens have a peculiar habit of calling out "Hi! hi!" at every step, to warn the passers-by of their approach; and this becomes such second nature with them, that even when they are resting they still keep up the same monotonous chant. It is rather strange to hear a coolie, resting on a doorstep or even walking without a burthen at all, calling out "Hi! hi!" dismally. The first time I

heard one doing this I thought he must have injured himself, and was in need of assistance, so I stopped to see what was the matter. But he evidently thought that I had felonious designs of some kind, for he hastily picked up his bamboo and made off.

Women and children carrying babies strapped on their backs are another class of pedestrians that continually attract my notice as I sit at my bedroom window. The number of babies I can see is something appalling. Not only has every woman one strapped to her back, but the little girls playing in the streets in most instances have the same appendage in the shape of an infant brother or sister. The nonchalance and ease with which they bear their burthens is very remarkable. They engage in the ordinary games of childhood with as much zest as though they had no such thing as a forty-pound baby saddled on them. If, in the ardour of playing, their charge gets disarranged, the girls simply give themselves a jolt, and shake it back to its proper position. I can see half-a-dozen of these immature nurses playing together, with some of the babies seemingly so disarranged as to be in imminent peril of their lives. And yet heads may hang down hazardingly, bandages become loosened, and little bodies be all twisted awry, but there is never any harm done. Just in the very nick of time the player stops for a moment, and by one miraculous wriggle, shakes her burthen back to its proper position, and resumes her game with childish unconcern. And a further remarkable feature is that the baby never cries, even under the most aggravating circumstances. It may be hanging limply, and have half its body trailing forlornly down, but it does not seem to mind it in the least. After the shake that rearranges it, it comes up smiling, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to be in peril of its life twenty times a day.

The most interesting sight in the street below is that afforded by the numerous processions which, every now and again, pass beneath my bedroom window. On an average, I should say, one passes every quarter of an hour—some large and some small—marriage and funeral processions; religious processions; and those formed by the retinue of guards-of-honour attending a mandarin. I can always hear one long before I catch a glimpse of it. An unearthly banging of

gongs and clashing of cymbals heralds its approach, accompanied by shouting and some advance ripples of excitement. Then it slowly makes its appearance—a long, disorganised line of musicians; banner-bearers; men with coloured lanterns; others with grotesque-looking frescoes, representing mythical personages; mimic soldiers, armed with wooden halberds and shields; coolies banging gongs; and lastly a long tail of scaramouches and vagabonds doing nothing in particular beyond looking disreputable and uncleanly. If it is a mandarin procession the soldiers are real ones, the banging and shouting more deafening, and the great man himself can be descried in the heart of the train riding an unkempt pony with a string of bells jingling round its neck, or else reposing snugly in a covered-in sedan-chair. Funeral processions are to be distinguished by the white draperies of the walkers, and the priests in long bleached garments that generally accompany them; marriage processions by the flaring crimson which is the emblem of Hymen and his festivities.

Some of the processions, however, are of the meanest description—perhaps not more than two or three coolies, one bearing a coloured lantern, one a gong, and one a banner. A procession of two or three, such as this, will march down the centre of the street with as much assumption as a full-sized one of fifty.

I am highly amused to see the way in which the average ricksha coolie acts when a procession happens to meander by. A second thoroughfare intersects the one my window commands, and this crossing is a spot generally fraught with misfortune and difficulty for the numerous processions as they go by. Down comes a ricksha man from the cross road, and, before he can stop, is in the heart of the procession, spreading disorganisation right and left. But he never budes or gives way an inch. He may have a five-cent fare of a dirty old Chinaman in his vehicle, whose business is of the least importance; but, all the same, the ricksha man as little brooks a stoppage as though the well-being of the empire depended on his fare reaching his destination within a certain time. Down he swoops, uttering stentorian notes of warning, and then—as the procession never dreams of taking the slightest notice of him, but marches on with all the solemnity the occasion demands—he finishes up by projecting himself into its midst, throwing the whole body into dire confusion. Then

of course he lifts up his sweet voice, and the procession follows suit, and for five minutes nothing is heard but shrill voices and vituperation. Other ricksha men join in; strong ripples of excitement and impatience agitate the rear ranks of the procession, forced to keep in line and pausing to join in the fray. Either contending party looks as if he would rather die than budge an inch, when, in nine cases out of ten, the procession surlily opens, and, with a whoop of triumph, the victorious ricksha man darts through and is off.

The vehicles which pass every now and again attract my notice in the intervals of procession-viewing. The country round Shanghai being flat, and the European settlement having good roads, one enjoys the novelty of seeing plenty of carriages in the street, which is not the case further south. Quite a number pass in front of my post of observation, mostly private conveyances belonging to Europeans. There are no horses—at most, one or two—Mongolian ponies being the substitute. Some very pretty equipages pass my window, most of them being toy broughams with windows all round, instead of wooden panels, looking wonderfully light and graceful. With a pair of well-matched cream or dapple-grey ponies, and neatly-uniformed coolie coachman and groom, they look charming. Such a one her fairy godmother might have bestowed on Cinderella to go to the King's ball in.

Dog-carts and buggies are the only other kind of vehicles I see. Every now and again one shoots past to the dismay of the pedestrians—for the average Chinaman thinks the centre of the road just as good a place to walk in as the footpath. One dog-cart that passed—quite a spruce affair—was manned and officered by young Chinese bloods. The driver was evidently an exquisite of the first water, and the overpowering air with which he held reins and whip, and conversed with an equally exquisite companion, was a matter of admiration to all beholders. Gloved and shawled, cigar in mouth, striped rug about their knees, the two looked condescendingly imposing, and even reflected lustre on the groom sitting with folded arms behind.

There is a ricketty old waggon which passes my window twice every day, and seems to ply regularly in a certain direction. It groans and creaks as it lumbers by, and is, I think, the most ramshackle vehicle I ever saw. The horse harnessed to it is a very Orson for hairiness, but possesses

a curious interest in my eyes in consequence of an adventure of which it was the hero. Just underneath my window a hawker had left a basket of vegetables on the footpath, whilst he transacted some business relative to the purchase of carrots by an old woman with one eye. Orson happened to clatter by at the time, and his eye lighted on the basket. With surprising promptitude he made a sudden dive to the sidewalk, thrust his head into the basket, and resumed his way with a good-sized turnip in his mouth. It did not take a minute to accomplish, and as the driver or any of the passers never thought of taking any steps in the matter, I suppose it was quite a matter-of-fact and ordinary occurrence. When Orson passed by on his return, I noticed that he kept a look-out, and turned his head enquiringly from side to side; but a second chance of impromptu refreshment did not offer itself, and so, shaking his heavy head dismally, he resumed his ordinary stolid look, and slowly slouched out of sight.

In the foregoing few paragraphs I have not made mention of one-half the persons and things that attract my attention, and arouse my interest. There are many other classes of pedestrians that come under my eye. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, and Americans—from the foreign consul down to the junior clerk; from the epauleted navy captain to the free-and-easy bluejacket. Native hawkers; occasional Japs, undersized and dark, but prepossessing from the mere fact of not wearing a pigtail; native merchants; coolies; servants; shopkeepers; porters; loafers; and other street-throngers, whose business or occupation can only be a matter of conjecture—all these crowd the footpaths and roadway, and pass and re-pass in never-ending streams.

I will close this paper by jotting down a note about a peculiar national custom which I have observed from my snug look-out. It is this. The ordinary Chinamen, as a rule, have their cherished pigtail loosely tied-up in a knot at the back of the head. This is in order to keep it out of harm's way. But when a Celestial meets a friend, before he stops to exchange the ordinary greetings, he gives his pigtail a poke, so as to bring it down his back again. The other follows suit; and whilst the two talk, the pigtail hangs down, and is not replaced until they part.

It is considered the height of impoliteness to converse with the pigtail looped

up; nor is it etiquette for servants to have theirs tied-up when attending on their masters.

It is a peculiar custom, but not a very troublesome one. One poke at the pigtail, and down it comes; and then, when the owner of it has learnt all the news—heard about the new baby at Pok Ung Lung's round the corner, and the death of the yellow dog belonging to his cousin, who lives in the street of Everlasting Delights—and has discussed the market price of rice, and made a remark about the weather, he takes his leave, and by one miraculous twist has got his pigtail tied up as fast as if it were held by a dozen hairpins and combs.

THE CHILDREN'S BREAD.

WHAT steps can we take to ensure that poor children shall have, at least, one good meal during the day? This is an important question, which has for some time attracted public attention. A solution of the problem was attempted by the promoters of the Penny Dinner scheme. Two objections, however, were raised against this movement. First, that the accounts of the children's privations were very much exaggerated; second, that the dinners would cost more than one penny, and, therefore, to sell them for less would serve to encourage improvidence and parental neglect.

It is but too true that a large number of children often attend school without having had any breakfast or dinner. They are too weak and exhausted to compete with their better-fed school-fellows, and in some cases the education bestowed upon them seems almost wasted. "The Times," of March third, 1887, roughly estimates the number of these hungry little ones at fifty thousand. In a Board School near King's Cross, the figures given were three hundred and forty-nine, or seventeen per cent. of the children attending the school. At Regent Street, Deptford, out of seven hundred and thirty children, sixty-four had had no breakfast on January the second, and seventy-three no dinner on the previous day. At Tower Street, Seven Dials, out of six hundred and thirty-nine, the numbers were seventy-six and fifty-nine, and at Drury Lane, out of six hundred and one, they were fifty-one and fifty-eight respectively.

It has been proved, by experiment, that the cost of material is sevenpence for every one hundred dinners. When the premises

are rent free, and "plant" is provided, the pence of one hundred and twenty children will not only cover expenses, but allow of a small profit towards the "plant." In Birmingham, under the same conditions, halfpenny dinners have been found to be self-supporting. At Cook's Ground, Chelsea, two hundred and sixty-two dinners were sold in one day, "and considerable profit was made every day."

Sir Henry Peek provided both education and dinners for the children attending his schools at Rousdon, in Devonshire, at a charge of fivepence per week. The fees were paid in advance, and thus the managers of the dinner kitchen had the advantage of knowing for how many children they were to prepare meals during the ensuing week. The children were taught to prepare the food themselves under the superintendence of the schoolmaster's wife.

In the cookery centres, established by the London School Board, the kitchens are fitted up with appliances suitable for a working man's home, with the addition of a gas-stove. Here the children are taught to cook a number of cheap and tasty dishes. These lessons might easily be supplemented by the preparation of penny dinners. The plan would be productive of much good. The children would not only enjoy a well-cooked and nourishing meal, but would have learnt how to prepare it. Parents who are out at work all day, and who cannot provide their children with food, will be glad for them to purchase dinners at the school. And the gain to the children themselves is obvious. Instead of spending the dinner-hour in the streets, with rough and sometimes questionable companions, these little ones will be having a comfortable hot meal in the schoolroom.

At Gateshead, the children are not only taught how to cook, but also how to serve.

"The plan is: at twelve o'clock so many children are told off to fetch in the table-cloths and put them on the desks—we always use table-cloths—then they fetch in the plates; and then the dinner is fetched in. Generally a lady and one or two of the teachers superintend. The teachers take it in turns. The whole thing is over in twenty-five minutes. As they come out they carry their spoons with them and drop them into a basket, and so many children are told off to clear up the plates. The whole thing is done in half an hour."*

* "Charity and Food." Longmans, Green, and Company. 1887.

The real difficulty lies not in the preparation and serving of dinners, but in their distribution. This is indeed a matter which requires much discrimination and tact on the part of the voluntary helpers. If the plan is to be a real and lasting success, it must be made self-supporting. Every individual case should be carefully enquired into, in order to prevent improvidence or neglect on the part of the child's natural guardians. If rags and dirt are to be the only guarantees required, the Penny Dinner movement, instead of being a blessing, will only serve to encourage a spirit of pauperism.

At the time when free tickets were distributed broadcast, a boy, who had a decent mother, deliberately tore up the sleeves of his jacket in order to qualify himself for admission to the dinner kitchen.

Another instance of the mistakes often made by charitable, but superficial observers, is given in the following story, which appeared in the "Charity Organisation Reporter," December the thirteenth, 1884:

"A certain poor widow, hearing of a place near by where children's dinners were being given for a halfpenny each, sent her three boys there one day duly provided with their halfpence. Two of them rushed off just as they were, but the third was captured and subjected to a little extra scrubbing for the occasion. The consequence was that, because he looked so nice and tidy, the lady who was officiating felt sure he could get a good dinner at home, and refused him the meal which his unwashed brothers were permitted to enjoy."

If, however, free tickets are discontinued, who is to feed the children who are half-starved, and yet have no money to produce? Take one instance. Among the children who carry coppers in their hands with which to purchase some food, appears a little pale-faced child without a penny. He asks for a dinner! What is to be done? "The child must not be sent away hungry," decides the benevolent distributor of the meal, and, yielding to a generous impulse, she gives the child a dinner. This will happen again and again, for the child is learning the easy but degrading lesson of dependence upon charity, and the parent is relieved of responsibility with regard to his child's support.

But while, on the one hand, it is not desirable to release careless or intemperate

guardians from their parental duties, there are some exceptional cases where the gift of dinners is really necessary—at least, for a time. As a rule, however, decent parents do not obtrude their wants upon public attention, but prefer to struggle on in their own way. They are unwilling to throw themselves upon the uncertain generosity of alms-givers, and endeavour to support their families by the exercise of thrift and self-denial. In these instances it is true economy to supply the present need, and thus prevent the families from being compelled to come upon the rates.

Among the children to whom dinners must be given when needed, may be reckoned those whose fathers from no fault of their own, but from depression of trade or ill-health, have been unable for a time to obtain work, and consequently have earned no wages. Children who have no fathers, and whose mothers are left without means of providing for their young families, who cannot contribute any earnings of their own, must also be fed.

The London School Board has no power to feed these children at the expense of the rates; and this is much to be regretted, for the following reasons.

(1). Enquiry could be made by school managers into cases requiring immediate help. In these instances, food could be given—as in Edinburgh—on condition of regular attendance. This would secure the daily presence in school of that class with whom the Board Officers have most trouble.

(2). The children being better fed would be able to learn more, and would earn a higher grant from Government for proiciency.

(3). Children and parents would be brought into personal contact with managers and other kindly-disposed persons, who would take an interest in their welfare.

(4). Managers, as an official body, would have the power to censure careless and intemperate guardians.

When parents cannot afford to buy food for their children, it follows as a natural consequence that they are also unable to pay the school fees. When the school-money is not forthcoming, it is customary for the parents to make application for the remission of fees on the ground of poverty. They are then required to appear before divisional members of the London School Board, at the "Notice B" meetings of Managers held at the various Board Schools, to show cause why the money is not paid.

Managers might be furnished from time to time by teachers with the names of children who appear to be suffering from hunger, but who cannot bring a penny for a meal. When the parents, or guardians, appear before the managers with respect to the remission of their children's school fees, they might at the same time be submitted to a strict enquiry into the reasons why the children are not provided with food. The "officers" who visit the homes of the children will be able to give the managers much information respecting the resources of the family. In some instances it will be found that the applicant for remission is in need of advice as well as relief. Not long ago, a man who had evidently just been enjoying a pipe, appeared before the Committee of Managers. On being asked why his children's fees were not paid, he answered that he had no money. "And yet you can afford to purchase tobacco," was the reply. It had not occurred to the man that he might, by a little self-sacrifice on his part, render himself independent of the rates. Careless, or idle parents, thus summoned before an official body, would learn, probably for the first time, that by wilfully neglecting their children under the age of fourteen they have broken the law, and are liable, upon conviction, to a punishment of six months' imprisonment with hard labour.

Again, an intemperate parent could be warned that by habitually spending in intoxicants the money which should support his family, he is infringing the law. He will most likely be surprised to hear that, by thus throwing his children upon the rates, he renders himself liable to conviction and punishment with hard labour for one month.

It will be easily understood that it will be necessary for managers to have their authority strengthened by power to summon before magistrates, those who refuse to attend the meetings and still continue to deprive their children of food.

Among the various and many schemes suggested for supplying indigent, but non-pauper children with the food they require, that of establishing Day Industrial Schools deserves our serious and earnest consideration.

In 1876, the "Education Amendment Act" gave authority to School Boards to establish Day Industrial Schools, and to obtain for them the certificate of the Secretary of State. But while these schools are needed to supplement Elementary Day

Schools, it is not intended that they should take the place of Certified Industrial Schools. They, however, differ from both in the following particulars. In Day Industrial Schools the children receive a training in manual labour in addition to their ordinary school work, and they are fed during the day, which is not the case in Elementary Day Schools, where intellectual instruction alone is given. At the same time, they are not lodged and clothed and entirely supported at the public expense, as in the case of Certified Industrial Schools. The parents are made to contribute towards the cost of the teaching and food bestowed upon their children. Of course it is not an easy matter to get this money out of the pockets of idle and intemperate guardians; and the Liverpool magistrates have avoided this difficulty by adopting the following ingenious plan.

When committing a child to a Day Industrial School, the parent is ordered, without any enquiry as to his ability, to contribute two shillings—that is the highest sum the law allows—to pay for his child's support and training. Should he be unable to pay—as most likely will be the case—he is directed to apply to the Poor Law Guardians of his parish. As, in his default, they are liable to the payment, they use their utmost endeavours to obtain the money from the parent.

It has been urged against this scheme that the cost of feeding the children at these schools will—although partly defrayed by industrial work—exceed the weekly fees paid for them at elementary schools. This is true; but the children who are thus habitually neglected by their parents, are likely to grow up idle and lawless members of society. Left to themselves, with no control but their own inclinations, there is nothing to prevent them from developing criminal propensities which will lead them to infringe the law. Then they will have to be supported entirely, for years, in a Certified Industrial School or in a prison. Surely it is cheaper in the end to give such children an industrial training which will enable them to get their own living honestly, either at home or in our colonies, and thus save them from being ruined for life.

The child by going home at night from the Day Industrial School, will communicate to his home the lessons of morality and industry he has learned during the day, and will probably awaken the dormant affections and energies of his natural guardians.

This would not be the case if he had been sent to a Certified Industrial School, and thus entirely severed from all home ties. At the same time the careless and intemperate guardians of children will be compelled to support them, and yet will be unable to make any profit out of their labours.

It is evident that a plan which thus forces neglectful parents to provide for their offspring, and also secures the future well-being of the children, cannot fail to be beneficial to the community at large.

A FORLORN HOPE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"Now," said my friend, Monsieur de St. Blancat, as, after a long climb, we halted on a rocky spur overlooking the river Ariège, "now, look round you, and give me your opinion, as an English officer, of the strategic importance of the point on which we stand."

Thus challenged, I looked critically right and left, at the tumultuous torrent which washed the base of the precipitous rock on which we stood; at the mountain road which wound painfully beside the stream up the gorge; at the wooded steeps which shut us in on every side, limiting our view of the road to a few hundred yards. Then I replied:

"The place is inaccessible, except by a path difficult to find, and more difficult to follow; it is admirably defended by the river; it commands, at an easy range, a considerable length of the road; I should, therefore, say it would be a post of incomparable value in the improbable contingency of an enemy marching upon Mas d'Azil; providing that an efficient force could be brought here, and a small fort built on the site of that ruined hut."

Monsieur de St. Blancat smiled: "It was not an improbable contingency which suggested my question; but an historical fact. Our little town of Mas d'Azil has passed through the danger you speak of; and, in her time of need, it was a force no more or less efficient than four stout-hearted peasants who stationed themselves here, and held at bay for three days an army of fourteen hundred men. Let us sit down in the ruined hut where they stored their ammunition and provisions, and where they watched through three nights of peril, and I will tell you one of the many interesting legends of the

Pyrenees. I cannot affix to the story any exact day or year; for, though these are the days of enlightenment and free education, the story of the defence of Mas d'Azil is not to be treated irreverently as a mere fact which one learns in class, and catalogues with other facts. We know, and this suffices, that it was more than a century and a half ago, when the King was old and his counsellors were evil; when the name of Huguenot was a brand of infamy; and when those who would not deny it were forced to take refuge in lonely mountain dwellings, hiding until such time as the King's troops should track them out and give them, at the sword's point, the choice of conversion or death."

Then he told me the following story.

Tradition does not indicate more clearly than this the date when the Maréchal de Thémînes received a royal commission to march as secretly as possible southward from Toulouse, across the plains, to ascend the narrow valley of the Ariège, and to attack and subdue the stronghold of Mas d'Azil, where the evil weeds of heresy and schism had found shelter, and were flourishing in insolent security.

The march would be long and difficult, and the fortress—locked among the mountains—would be no easy prey; but the King's troopers were stout veterans, and, though their leader was the poorest of drawing-room braves, not a man among them doubted for a moment of the issue of the short, sharp campaign.

For there were no soldiers and no arms among the Huguenot mountaineers, and the Vicomte de St. Blancat, an ancestor of mine, a staunch Huguenot, who looked upon himself as the lord and protector of the little town, lived two days' journey farther in the mountains on the Spanish frontier, so that, before he could be summoned and appear, all would be over with Mas d'Azil.

Secretly as the preparations were made, however, vague rumours got abroad and floated southward, stirring men's minds uneasily, though without gaining general credence. In fact, there was only one man who was so far moved by the distant mutterings of danger, as to turn his thoughts to the possibility of defence. This man was Jean Duson, who lived in the bourg of Carlat le Comte, three leagues northward from Mas d'Azil.

Jean Duson was a man of mark among his fellows. In his youth he had served the Marquis de Foix, and during the great war in Flanders had seen much of soldiering. When peace was made, he had come back to his native village, bringing with him a little daughter of ten years old, whose Flemish mother slept in some northern graveyard, and who seemed more than half a foreigner to the numerous cousins of every degree in the bourg of Carlat le Comte. She was tall and fair, while the village girls were small and dark; her eyes were blue and theirs were brown; the costume she wore looked strange, and the dialect she spoke sounded outlandish to them. Nevertheless, for kinship's sake, she was welcomed, and presently, for her own sake, she was beloved.

It was now eight years since Jean Duson had changed the sword for the ploughshare; but he had not forgotten his old life, nor his tales of battle and adventure; while Jeanne had grown into a lovely maiden, with whom half the lads in the village, and notably her three cousins—Gérard, Maurice, and Jean Baptiste Duson—were head over ears in love.

It would seem that Mademoiselle Jeanne was not without a spice of coquetry; for, until the memorable summer in which these incredibly alarming rumours were afloat, she had treated all her devotees with a provoking equality of indifference—excepting her cousin Gérard, and to him she had been positively harsh.

It is impossible to say if this harshness were the cause or the effect of Gérard's conduct; the fact remains that he and his brothers were the black sheep, not only of the hamlet, but of the whole neighbourhood. Many infringements of the forest laws were vaguely laid to their charge, and it was also whispered that some of their nocturnal escapades had a higher stake than the red deer or small game, and that when the contrabandists ran their risky way to and fro across the Spanish frontier, they often found friendly help from the three tall brothers Duson in the bourg of Carlat le Comte; and these rumours could not possibly be favourable to Gérard as a pretender to the hand of the well-dowered belle of the village.

Now while the good folk of Mas d'Azil were doing their best to deal ostrich-fashion with the alarms which came drifting southward on the breath of rumour, Jean Duson was growing more and more

convinced that at the present juncture the strength of a wise man was not "to sit still."

Not being loquacious, however, he soon gave up the attempt to argue his fellow-villagers of Carlat le Comte into the same frame of mind; but he took down a couple of long fowling-pieces which he had hanging against the wall, and while he was examining and cleaning them, he unburdened his mind to his daughter of the bold plan he was forming, and of the need there was to find a few more volunteers who would stand in the forefront of the danger, and lay down, if needful, their lives for their brethren.

"Thou seest, child," he explained, "if Monsieur le Vicomte would march his men down to the opening of the gorge, and post them there with his four great field-pieces ready for action, we should be safe. But Monsieur le Vicomte is over cautious; he says the King's troops are merely en route from Toulouse to Perpignan; and that any warlike preparations on his part would justly provoke punishment. He will only realise his error when Monsieur le Maréchal has already entered the valley. Then it will take a messenger thirty-six hours to bear the news to him; another thirty-six hours will be required to march his men to Mas d'Azil—three whole days—time enough for the soldiery to raze the town to the ground; unless——"

Then, as her father unfolded a great scheme over which he was meditating, Jeanne's face turned from white to red, and from red to white; her bosom heaved; her breath came quick and short, and the tears ran unheeded down her burning cheeks.

"But you cannot do it alone," she said, "and who will help you?"

"Yes," repeated her father, "who will help me?—that is the question. Whose trust in my leadership and in the good cause is great enough to make him a volunteer in such a forlorn hope?"

To which doubting words Jeanne gave no reply.

The next day, as Gérard Duson was passing his uncle's house—which he had now for many months done with averted eyes—he stopped short with a start of surprise, and not unpleasant surprise, either. His cousin Jeanne, who had avoided him persistently for some time, had called to him from the open doorway.

"I am on my way to Mas d'Azil," he said in reply. "Do you want anything from there?"

"I want something," she said, "but not from Mas d'Azil. Are you in a great hurry?"

"I am in no hurry, Jeanne; if you want anything of me I am at your service—you have only to ask."

But when he had come in through the door and stood in patient expectation, she was silent, only looking at him with anxious, questioning eyes, and he had full leisure to observe that her face was paler than usual. "You are thinking," he said, presently, "of what you said to me in the vineyard last October. I have not forgotten it either; you have not spoken to me since, and I do not suppose you have changed the opinion you had of me then. I, too, feel still as I spoke then. However, we will put that aside for the moment. I see you are in some trouble, and, perhaps, I can help you—if it is so, speak out; I shall not say 'Jeanne, you treated me with scorn when I asked something of you;' nor shall I put any price on my service."

He spoke gravely and proudly, as if, though suffering from a sense of injustice received, he would not avail himself of this opportunity of vindicating himself.

"You are very generous, Gérard," she said, timidly. "I have always thought that of you; what I am going to ask of you is a great thing. Will you do a great deal if I ask you?"

"I will try," he answered, simply. "I wish you would tell me what it is, and not speak any longer in riddles."

"And it is not for me—at least, only for me among many."

"I have promised to try, whatever it is."

"It is a matter of life and death."

"I have risked my life often; once more will be no great matter."

"Yee," cried Jeanne, her eagerness overpowering her doubts at last, "you have risked your life more than once for a few paltry head of game; you have run your neck into a noose for the few francs you could earn by contraband dealing. You and your brothers have proved your courage in a worthless cause, and now, not to one, but to all three, the opportunity is offered of utilising your experience and contempt of difficulty and danger in the defence of your home and your own kin. The attack on us is certain—though those who ought to be preparing to meet it will not believe so. My father is alive to the peril of delay; he is only in want of two or three able volunteers to enable him to

hold the mouth of the gorge against the King's troops, until M. le Vicomte can be summoned. My father is an old soldier, he would not undertake this if he did not feel sure of the result. Mas d'Azil and the valley will be saved—those who save must not think of themselves. It is a hero's part that is offered to you."

"We will go with him," said Gérard, looking full into her flashing eyes. "I will talk to Maurice and Jean Baptiste. Jean Baptiste has a nasty cough; the mother is unhappy about it, and wants him not to expose himself any more on the mountains at night; before he begins to nurse himself he must make one more sally. Now good morning, my cousin, unless you have something more to say."

"No, there is nothing more, except that I am glad you bear no malice about what I said in the vineyard. I am afraid I was a little hard."

"So you were," replied Gérard, simply.

"I shall never say such hard things of you again."

"Thank you, Jeanne," he answered. Then, without any more words, he went out, taking along the road to Mas d'Azil a burden of thoughts, in which speculations as to his uncle's plan of defence outweighed conjectures respecting Jeanne's change of manner towards him.

So it came to pass that Jean Duseon found efficient help to carry out his design, and after considerable consultation and preparation, everything was planned, provided, and put in order.

I cannot tell you how often the Dusons reconnoitred the valley before they fixed on this rock on which we are seated as the most advantageous position they could man, and decided on storing their home-cast bullets and all the powder they could collect, with provisions for several days, in this hut. Nor do I know if they sent out spies, nor how they gained information concerning the march of the attacking force; all I can tell you is that they were here ready when the great moment came—when the head of Maréchal de Thémînes's column turned that curve which you see to your right, and advanced jauntily and unconcernedly as men might advance on their way to certain victory. In twenty paces, as you see, the first line was within range of four well-aimed guns which lay hidden in the brushwood up above the further bank of the river.

Softly the elder Duseon gave the word. There was a puff of smoke; a sharp report

echoed from side to side of the valley. A cry of angry dismay, mingled with groans of agony, rose from the road; and four men, out of the two front lines, rolled in the dust, stricken down by unerring marksmen.

The gay march halted in confusion, and every man took a general survey of the surroundings. There was the silent, empty road winding onwards; the lonely, wooded steepes on either side; the river swollen by the melted snow. The smoke had been driven down the summer wind, and no living thing was visible. Meanwhile the little band had reloaded, and taken fresh aim; the confusion of surmise and vituperation was interrupted by a second volley, and once more four stalwart troopers fell mortally wounded. It was obvious now that some one was concealed on the further side of the river; but how many, or whereabouts in the masses of brushwood which covered the rocks, was not so easy to discern.

The officer in command of the vanguard ordered a volley to be fired in the direction of the shots. The Dusons crouched behind a breastwork of earth which they had thrown up, and, had the aim from below been faultless, instead of at random, they had nothing to fear. Before the smoke of the discharge had cleared away they fired again, with the same deadly result as before, and by that time the skirmish may be said to have fairly begun. Time after time the soldiery raked the precipice opposite with no result but expenditure of ammunition; time after time the Dusons discharged and loaded their guns—which, by the way, they had procured from Gérard's friends, the *contrabandisti*—each time with loss to the enemy.

When news was carried to the *Maréchal*—who was with the main body of the army—that the mountain was full of desperate peasants, and that the troops were being shot down like so many quails, he gave orders that the infantry should fall back, and that the cavalry should charge past the ambush.

The infantry were not sorry to carry out their part of the instructions; then the cavalry attempted their share, but as soon as they came within range of that deadly fire they fell, by twos, by threes, and by fours, till the narrow road was encumbered with wounded men and horses.

A council of war, therefore, was called; the *Maréchal* decided to retreat to the mouth of the valley, and halt there for the

night, and, under cover of darkness, to bring his cannon—he had three pieces—to bear upon the point from which it was now apparent that the firing proceeded.

The Dusons, on their part, saw, with the utmost thankfulness, the effect of their first day's work. While the messenger, who had been despatched to the *Vicomte*, had been making his way over the mountains, the invaders had not gained one foot of the valley, and were, moreover, totally ignorant of the numbers and efficiency of the force which baffled their march.

But their success did not blind them to their weakness and danger. They heard in the darkness the great field pieces being dragged into position, one shot from which would shatter their slight earthwork. So all night long they laboured to strengthen their primitive fortifications, and, at dawn, when all was still, they snatched an hour's rest.

All the following day the unequal battle went on. The gunners were shot down as they served the guns. More than once the great cannon-balls, rebounding from the rocks, did mischief to the troops; but the Dusons escaped without a graze. The second evening closed in, and again the *Maréchal* had to order a bivouac on the same spot.

On that second day Jean Baptiste had not been a very active warrior. His physical force had fallen far short of his courage, and he had had to retire, faint and weary, from the action long before the cannonade ceased. As he lay in the hut he bethought him that the *miquelets** would, in all probability, be sent out to explore the mountain to discover their position, and to surround and destroy them.

You remember, my good friend, that you found the path which led us hither uncommonly difficult and rough; so it would be, Jean Baptiste knew, to the *miquelets*; nevertheless, as the path existed, there existed also a possibility that it might be found and followed; and this perilous possibility must be provided against.

When the day was over and the soldiers had again fallen back, a consultation on this important point was held, and it was decided that the course of the stream, along whose margin we climbed, must be turned out of its bed, so as to render invisible, and almost impracticable,

* Sharpshooters.

the already very little used path. "And that," said Jean Dason, "must be the work of Jean Baptiste. He has rested; we others must husband our force for a long day's fighting to-morrow."

So it was done; and by daybreak where the rugged ascent had been, a wild cataract swept its way between the roots of the evergreen oaks.

All that day the firing continued, with the same almost incredible results—remember this is a story true to the letter—but there was still at least a night and a day to pass before the Vicomte's troops could have reached Mas d'Azil, and the Dusons had observed that a considerable body of miquelets was absent from the army. It was true that the precautions of the previous night had increased their safety; but there remained the risk that, after having held out the requisite time, they might find their retreat to Carlat le Bourg cut off. Therefore, when for the third time the Maréchal ordered his force to bivouac, Gérard Dason volunteered to go and see if the way to the village were still open, while Jean and Maurice slept, and Jean Baptiste, who had again rested in the afternoon, kept watch.

Gérard's expedition was an undertaking of no small difficulty. In the dark, and at the risk of stumbling across the miquelets anywhere and at any moment, he had to make his way through obstacles which you are just now quite in the mood to appreciate. I will not attempt to describe them. It is sufficient to say that at length he safely reached the hillside on which the village stands.

A few glimmering lights told him that all was not deserted. He sought out in the dimness the big house at the end of the village, which belonged to Jean Dason. A light gleamed there; Jeanne was watching—praying for them, no doubt; perhaps her prayers had guided his perilous path just now. He would go to her and tell her that all had gone well, and that there was good hope of final success.

"It is I, Jeanne," he called out, reassuringly, when he had tapped on the door, and Jeanne, white-faced, and trembling with hope and fear, opened to him.

"I have come with good news," he went on—"we are all safe, and safe we hope to remain. Jean Baptiste is too weak to fight much; but when he has to give up, we are enough without him. By to-morrow evening the Vicomte's troops will

be at Mas d'Azil, and we shall come down to join the defence. In the meantime you must all get to the town as quickly as possible; there is a scouring party on the mountains, the village is no longer safe."

"And you," she replied, anxiously, "will it be safe for you to return if the soldiers are on the alert?"

"Yes," he replied, stoutly, "ours is the good cause, and your prayers will be with me."

"Yes, Gérard, I shall pray and watch until I see you again. May Heaven hear my prayers." Then, before he turned to go, she added: "This is no time to think of ourselves; still, I must ask you to forgive me for the angry words I spoke once, and the angry silence that I kept afterwards."

"Let us both forgive, Jeanne," he answered, promptly, "and when the time comes to speak of such things again, let me hope for a kinder answer to the question I asked you then."

She did not speak, but her pale face glowed, her sad eyes lighted up as she held out both hands to him. He came closer to her.

"Jeanne, I must not linger; Heaven be with thee, my own lass." And, as he spoke, he wrapped his strong arms round her, and pressed his betrothal kiss on her forehead. In another moment he was once more on the dark hillside, and Jeanne was alone, weeping tears of joy, and mingling her half-despairing petition with sweet thanksgivings.

If Gérard's descent from the hut had been perilous, his return was doubly so. Twice he had to evade parties of scouts, and the dawn had stolen over the sky before he reached the last precipice, down which, in default of the path, he had to scramble. Here, however, the risk was, so to speak, over; and he might scramble boldly without dreading the result of every bough that snapped or every stone that rattled.

Behind their primitive fortifications Jean Dason and Maurice had been sleeping the sleep of the weary, and Jean Baptiste, who had slept during the previous afternoon, was using every endeavour to fulfil conscientiously the office of sentinel. But his weakness overpowered him; again and again he found that his agitated thoughts were assuming the incoherent form of a dream. Suddenly he was aroused from this semi-waking state by a clatter of falling rocks. Some one was approaching;

was even now climbing over the earthwork. The miquelets had ferreted them out; it was all over with them. Ill and weary as he was he resolved to die hard. Calling the others, he levelled his gun and took deadly aim at the intruder, whom he now saw in the faint light. A cry of dismay rang out.

"My brother, what hast thou done?" and Jean Duson reached the earthwork in time to receive the wounded man in his arms.

"Gérard, Gérard!" wailed poor Jean Baptiste, "speak, thou art not badly hurt?"

His only reply was a mournful shake of the head, while his uncle endeavoured vainly to staunch the blood which flowed from a wound in his side.

"Canst thou give thy report?" the old man asked tenderly; "it were bitter to die for nothing."

"At present you can retreat," gasped the dying man; "but the miquelets are close here—they will find us without fail. You must go at once—before daylight. Twice I was nearly in their hands. You have done enough."

"We cannot go, my son, and leave you here."

"Why not?" he said, still more feebly. "I am a dead man."

"And I am an old man. A few years are all I have left. I shall not strive to save them. I shall stay here, as long as it is possible to fire a shot."

"And I," said Jean Baptiste, "who am marked out for an early death, I do not care to live with my brother's blood on my head. I stay also."

"Then Maurice must go," whispered Gérard; "the cause cannot spare us all."

So, after much urging, Maurice did go; and, as he reached Carlat le Comte in safety, the particulars of the story were by his means preserved in the village tradition.

The other Dusons died the deaths of martyrs on this very spot; for the miquelets found the way to the hut, and killed them without mercy.

When the signal was waved from this point that the troops had taken it, the army advanced with great caution and dread of other ambushes, and reached Mas d'Azil a few hours after the town had been fully prepared to receive them.

The unsuccessful blockade, however, and the terrible hardships endured by the besieged, are not part of the story I wished you to hear. It is sufficient to say that

the Dusons had not died in vain, and that the King's troops did not take Mas d'Azil.

"And Jeanne?" I asked, for I felt one touch was still wanting to the record.

"Jeanne," replied Monsieur de St. Blancat, "kept the promise she had made to her lover: that she would watch and pray till she met him again. And I am sure that the lodestar by which she shaped her course was not a forlorn hope."

FRUIT-GROWING.

Now that great expectations are being entertained respecting the profits to be derived from fruit-growing as compared with those obtainable from farming, it is permissible to point out a few considerations which may save many from cruel disappointment, or even disastrous loss.

For people who plant merely for pleasure, amusement, or ornament—as peach, almond, and mirabelle plum-trees, are often planted in shrubberies for the sake of their blossoms—and not for profit, the drawbacks and difficulties, about to be mentioned, of course are negligible circumstances.

When politicians recommend the growing of fruit as an alleviation to agricultural depression and as a means of livelihood, it would be well to ask them—first, what they mean by "fruit," and next, whether they have ever grown fruit themselves for the purpose of selling it.

Fruit, in relation to its commercial capabilities, varies almost more than any other article included in one general term and designation. There are fruits that will bear long voyages, and which, being gathered before they are ripe, will ripen uninjured in the course of their journey to market. Familiar and valuable instances of this good quality, are oranges and lemons. Nuts of all kinds, which are botanically, although not popularly, fruits, are still more capable of lengthy transport. The same of almonds, or kernels, which are only the edible portions of certain fruits.

Is there any need to say that it makes an immense difference in the value of any crop, whether it will support a considerable interval of keeping and travelling before it is consumed, or whether it will not? Unfortunately, the fruits which can best be depended on as sure to give a more or less abundant annual crop, are amongst those which least bear transport to a distance. Raspberries, so easy to grow in

a soil that is not too dry, and supporting well a considerable amount of shade, can rarely appear at desert in large towns, because, in the course of their journey, they fall into an unpresentable juicy mess, great part of which drains away and is lost, unless brought in an earthen vessel. In the country, fresh gathered from the garden, they are delicious with the addition of a little cream and sugar.

Strawberries, which thrive in any good sound loam well exposed to air and sunshine, bear carriage better, but still net in bulk. Corners of fields at the extremity of Brittany are planted with strawberries for the Paris market. The sorts vary greatly in their merits as to being good or indifferent travellers. The first, combined with earliness, is the quality sought by market-gardeners. New varieties, with these recommendations, are constantly being offered by nurserymen. One of the latest, *La Bruxelloise*, is described as large, vermilion red, exquisite, productive, surpassing all others in earliness, keeping and supporting transport well, and, consequently, excellent for culture on a large scale. But, in truth, there is a fashion in strawberries. Varieties, once great favourites, like *Sir Charles Napier*, are now discarded, on account of tenderness of constitution, or other defect, to make room for novelties which promise better—but do not always keep their promise.

Currants and gooseberries are still more to be depended on as travellers, if gathered dry, and packed in baskets containing only moderate quantities. Nor are they difficult in respect to soil, situation, and aspect. The chief effect of those influences is to induce more or less earliness in ripening. All the sorts, too, are easily propagated, and soon come into bearing.

A favourite liqueur in France, called *Cassis*—from a town of that name on the Mediterranean coast, between Marseilles and Toulon, which trades largely in olive oil, capers, wines, and fruits—has black currants for the basis of its flavouring. Our grandmothers made black-currant wine, which, when George the Fourth was Regent, was thought “not bad” by school-boys.

Persons who think of growing these fairly-sure, but perishable, fruit in any great quantity, will do well to think of their market beforehand. If they can be near to, and make a contract with, any large jam-preserving establishment, even at low but assured prices, so much the

better. It is a mockery to tell farmers, whose affairs are not prosperous, that they can set themselves right by growing fruit and making it into jam themselves. They have only to consult the current prices in the shops. Indeed, it is admitted that “opinions will differ as to whether much profit can be got from fruit-growing in this country, except on a great scale, as by Lord Sudeley, with all the appliances for jam-making and fruit-drying, so as to secure against gluts in the market, and in cottage-gardens.” To this it may be remarked that, the greater the scale the greater the risk, and the greater the crash should things go wrong.

The worst of it is, that the poor fellow, who gives up farming for fruit-growing, will have to acquire a new art and learn a new trade. They are industries which require long experience and practice, often transmitted from father to son, and at any rate demanding some apprenticeship. He must be taught the budding of stone-fruits; the grafting of apples and pears; the pruning, planting, and renewing soft fruits; and all at their respective seasons. If the master does not work himself, he should at least know and be able to direct what work must be done, how, and when.

If the enemies of corn crops, roots, and pastures be counted by scores, the voracious and destructive foes of fruit will have to be reckoned by their thousands. And, unfortunately, the remedies are few, partial, or difficult of application. And how are you to ward off an onslaught like this? “A gale of exceptional severity prevailed throughout the North Warwickshire district during Saturday night, October the twenty-seventh, 1888, and the whole of Sunday. The force of the wind was so great that in many gardens and orchards apple and pear trees were stripped of their fruit, the ground being strewn with the produce. Trees were uprooted in some of the more exposed situations.” Fallen fruit may, perhaps, sell for something; but it is not such windfalls as these that will make a man's fortune.

One disadvantage of wholesale fruit-growing is, that at some seasons it occupies a great many hands, and at others very few. Some fruits—strawberries, raspberries—require daily looking over and gathering during their period of ripening. That over, the plants are cultivated with a moderate amount of care bestowed on them from time to time. No doubt, extra gatherers, like hop-pickers,

would be forthcoming, were a demand for them to arise. But fruit requires more delicate and cleanly handling than hops do. Moreover, hop-pickers do not eat what, and while, they pick; whereas, it would be difficult to prevent currants and gooseberries from being tasted, or to forbid a bite out of a rosy-cheeked apple. During the vintage, the quantity of grapes eaten by workpeople is considerable, notwithstanding that they are well looked after. An equal percentage subtracted from a raspberry or strawberry crop would make a serious hole in the grower's profits. The value even of apples and pears is seriously diminished by rough treatment in gathering. I once sold the surplus produce of a small orchard at a price above the average, "because master and mistress had helped to gather the fruit."

Supposing their fruit trees, bushes, plants, or canes, to be well established and in full bearing, persons who embark in fruit-growing on any but the most moderate scale, need still be possessed of sufficient capital—when one, two, or three bad years occur successively, as they will—to enable them to wait and hold their own until good years follow to bring them again up to the mark. The case is similar to that of wine-growers, with their vicissitudes of profitable and unprofitable harvests; only there is this great difference, namely, that a superabundant crop of wine will keep, and improve by the keeping, both in quality and price—thin wines can be mixed with others of superior body—whereas, a superabundance of fruit will not keep long, but will decrease both in bulk and value every day.

A complaint is made that our shops are full of plums, imported from abroad, which might be grown in England as well. Might they? That is the question. It would be just as reasonable to complain that our shops are full of oranges, which might possibly be grown in England—in greenhouses. But commerce does not take note of possibilities, but of quantity, quality, and cost.

If the North of France finds it necessary to obtain a supply of greengage and other plums from the Centre and the South, surely England need not scruple to accept the consequences of her geographical position, without fighting a too hazardous battle with atmospheric and climatic influences. No doubt, greengages can be grown in England as well as in the North

of France; but not with sufficient earliness, certainty, or quantity, to make them a safe speculation as a paying crop. As a luxury, home-grown greengages are both pleasant and possible; but as a steadily profitable source of income, will they pay for the ground they occupy and the cost of production? That is the problem to be solved before investing capital in their culture. For, in these days of Free Trade, English fruit-growers will hardly ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to impose a heavy tax on imported fruit, as a protection against foreign competition.

It is a mistake to assert in general terms that "there is nothing as regards climate or soil which should prevent the raising of English fruit for the English markets." All fruits and vegetables, to pay, require to be grown under specially favourable conditions, which are not found everywhere, either in England or on the Continent.

Even in climates more genial than our own, there are degrees in the profitable cultivation of fruit. Orange trees are grown for their blossoms alone, to be employed in confectionery and the manufacture of perfumes, in spots where oranges, when ripe, would be in small request. Lemons have to be grown trained to a wall, like peach trees with us, in localities where standard orange trees thrive perfectly in the open.

What has become of Cobbett's Indian Corn, which was to confer a cheap loaf on the cottager? Where are the white mulberry trees, which were to feed the silkworms, which were to make England a silk-producing country, independent of Italy?

Stone-fruits thrive best in soil containing a decided admixture of chalk or gypsum. Thus Kent supplies cherries, and Montreuil-aux-Pêches, near Paris, peaches. The plum tribe, on which no arts of acclimatisation have been able to confer a habit of flowering late, must be sheltered from early frosts in spring, otherwise the crop is nil.

The plum-grower's expectations, indeed, like Cardinal Wolsey's, are far too often doomed to disappointment:

To-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost—a killing frost,
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his shoot;
And then he falls.

The most favoured spots for the growth

of kitchen vegetables are also peculiar in their soil and situation. The conditions which enable Cornwall to supply us with early potatoes, broccoli, and other good things, do not exist elsewhere, to the same extent, in England. Roscoff, on the opposite coast of Brittany, is similarly circumstanced. The Petit Courgain (not the fishermen's quarter), near Calais, and Rosendaal, near Dunkirk, export enormous quantities of first-rate early vegetables, grown in nearly pure sand, enriched with town manure. It is noticeable that all these spots are quite close to the sea, and subject to its influences. From the two last places, fruits are all but absent.

The old proverb, "Plant pears, plant for your heirs," though now modified by the practice of raising dwarf pyramidal trees grafted on quince stocks and by espaliers, or trees trained against walls, is still true of tall standard orchard trees, especially those intended for the production of perry pears. Now, in many cases, the heirs who would profit by the planting would be the landlords.

Early apples are not much wanted, except as ornaments to the dinner table. They will not keep long; and when they come in, there is plenty of other good fruit available. Nevertheless, choice specimens of the Transparent Codling, the Irish Peach, Emperor Alexander, and Hawthornden are always welcome to look at and admire, if not to eat.

Late-blossoming apples, more to be depended on and more useful when they come, are still liable to injury from our protracted springs, which often make sad havoc with the weight of their crops.

An increased supply of home-grown fruit is most likely to come, not in heavy masses from big fruit-farms, but in widespread detail from small peasant-proprietors, who cultivate the kinds best suited to their holdings, as a supplement to their other produce, and not as a staple crop. Such folks will not be too proud to work with their own hands, or to deliver their fruit to customers by themselves or their wives, and so avoid the good pleasure and the charges of middlemen, not to mention the great saving thus possible in the payment of wages. They are people who will have learned to look before they leap, to know that there is many a slip between the blossom and the profit, and not to risk in a doubtful enterprise more than they can well afford to lose.

A PRODIGAL SON.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

THAT day was a day of horrors for Serjeant Stronge. When he had sufficiently recovered from the shock of the announcement of his son's suicide, he went down to the mortuary, where he saw the poor lad lying stark and stiff; his famished face and threadbare clothes bearing fearful testimony to the misery he had suffered, before the kindly Thames had given him repose for ever. Horror-stricken by the sight; conscience-stricken by the frightful result of his resentment, the broken-hearted, broken-spirited old man made enquiries for the widow and child. Their residence was soon discovered in the fourth floor of a rickety house up a squalid alley. With trembling steps the Serjeant followed a policeman there. He found the widow frenzied with sorrow for her husband's loss. She may have been only a scullery-maid, but she adored, with her whole heart and soul, the young gentleman who had loved her with an honest love. She had never seen the Serjeant, and did not know him; but when the policeman, who had guided him there, told her who he was, she greeted him with a wild cry of "Murderer!" The old man, horrified beyond expression, tried to appease her by proffers of assistance, but she spurned them with a furious contempt. The scene was horribly painful, and on the old lawyer's already shattered nerves it had a fearful effect. When, at last, he left the wretched apartment and the raving woman, he was so weak that it was only by the policeman's help that he was enabled to get down the shaky stairs and into the cab that awaited him below.

That night, when he returned to King's Bench Walk and sat down before the fire, his face was as white and ghastly as the face of the dead. He had not been a kind master to his old laundress, but so pitiful was his condition that her heart was melted towards him. She stayed long in the room, in the hope that she might be of service to him; but he seemed to be unconscious of her presence. At last she asked him if she could do nothing for him. The sound of her voice startled him from his reverie; but when he realised who it was that spoke, he irritably told her to get home. With a bitter feeling that no trials or afflictions could ever change him, she obeyed his order.

After her departure he sat motionless for a long time, gazing in silence into the glowing fire before him. What agonised feelings of sorrow and remorse tore his broken spirit! What bitter recollections of the long distant, but unforgotten past—of his dead Edith and his dead boy—passed through his whirling brain! With a heart so firm and a mind so strong as his, the little griefs which vex little men pass unnoticed; but when the great griefs come, the griefs that can break such a heart and unsettle such a mind, the agonies suffered are those of a giant.

The storm which had raged the previous night was now gone, and a dead calm reigned in its stead. Not a sound was to be heard among the leafless trees and deserted courts without; not a whisper of the wind, not an echo of a human voice or step. Inside, a still deeper silence, if possible, prevailed. Not a draught rustled the heavy curtains; not a mouse scampered behind the ancient wainscoting; even the fire itself had ceased to hiss and crackle, and lay in glowing embers on the hearth. No noise broke the oppressive silence, save one: the great old clock in the corner went on tick-tick, tick-tick, ceaselessly and calmly, like the footsteps of an ever-pursuing, inevitable fate.

As the old lawyer sat that night amid that profound silence, gazing into the glowing coals and musing mournfully over his sorrows, a strange thought entered his troubled mind. Hitherto he had been emphatically the strong man who relied on his own strength. He had laughed at those weak souls who trusted to luck, or fate, or Heaven; by whatever name they called it he cared little. For himself, he trusted only to himself; and he was convinced that by his own right arm he could, and would, shape his own destiny. Now it occurred to him, for the first time, that, after all, perhaps he—he, John Stronge—was a plaything in the hands of an irresistible and unknown Power.

The thought startled, staggered him. Could it be that what he had laughed at as foolishness was the highest wisdom? Could it be that his whole life's work had been planned on a wrong principle—that he had not considered what should have been the chief consideration? In his weak, spirit-broken state, he felt inclined to believe it.

Influenced by this, to him, unusual train of thought, he roused himself and searched out from among his books one that he had

not opened for many a year. It was a present given to him, during their courtship, by his dead Edith. What recollections that old book recalled! what recollections of youth, and love, and happiness, of that sweet past, before fiery ambition had hardened his soul as clay is hardened in a furnace!

That book was the Bible. Opening it at random he read. As he read, the stillness around seemed to become more and more profound. Outside, not a murmur was to be heard; inside, the very ticking of the great old clock seemed for the time to cease. A strange, intense, unnatural silence pervaded everything.

He read on, only half realising what he read; his mind was too much occupied by the fearful scenes and experiences of the day to be easily fixed on anything else. But gradually his attention became more and more attracted, until at last it was rivetted on the page before him. A feeling of fear, a sense of the supernatural seized upon him, for he found that by some strange chance he had opened the Bible at that passage which of all others applied to his present circumstances. He had opened it at the Parable of the Prodigal Son. As he read, the silence became more and more oppressively intense.

"And he arose," the old lawyer read, "and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again——"

"Tap, tap, tap," sounded suddenly on the outside door through the preternatural silence.

With a gasp the old lawyer sprang to his feet. Holding by the mantelpiece to steady his trembling form, he waited for a repetition of the knock; quivering with fear, pale with excitement, he waited. Everything was as silent as the grave. Suddenly the great old clock in the corner chimed out the hour, loud and clear. It struck ten.

Sweating with agony and terror, the old

lawyer stood waiting for a renewal of the knock. He waited in vain. None came. Everything remained as silent as the grave. There was no sound of footsteps on the stairs. There was no sign of human motion or human presence. The knock seemed like a summons from the dead!

At length, almost fainting with weakness and fear, Serjeant Stronge sank back into his chair, and sat there for a long time trembling. An hour had elapsed before he had recovered sufficient calmness to think reasonably of the sound he seemed to have heard.

"My mind is getting unhinged," he then said to himself. "My imagination is playing me tricks. Trouble is unnerving me altogether. I must pull myself together—must make an effort to take my mind off these ghastly subjects, or I shall go raving mad."

He rose nervously, and put some fresh coals on the fire. He took the shade off the reading-lamp, and turned up the flame to its highest point. He wanted light, more light. Darkness had become a terror to him. But yesterday he was a man who would have faced anything; to-day sorrow and remorse had made him a child again who feared the dark.

That night Serjeant Stronge did not go to bed. Through the long hours of darkness he sat before the blazing fire with his lamp burning high, and trembled if a curtain rustled or a window creaked.

The next morning being Monday, his old clerk called according to his custom at King's Bench Walk, bringing with him the letters from Serjeant Stronge's business chambers in Pump Court.

"I can't attend to business for the present, John," the Serjeant said to him. "Tell any client who asks about me that I cannot be seen till after the Vacation."

"I will, sir," answered the old clerk, who had seen all about his master's calamities in the morning papers.

"And, John," said the Serjeant, "just come back here in the evening. I may want you to stop with me over night. The troubles I've gone through since Saturday have quite unnerved me. I'm actually afraid to stay here at night alone."

"Yes, sir," replied the old clerk, dutifully.

He had not been used to be spoken to by his master in that gentle way, and the softening of the Serjeant's manner touched him.

"And, John," the Serjeant went on,

"you might go round to 12, Bute's Court, where my son's widow lives, and see if you can induce her to accept help. She refused it from me yesterday; but she was wild with despair. She may be calmer and more reasonable to-day. I'm too weak and—and nervous to see her again myself."

"Yes, sir," answered the old clerk.

The change in the Serjeant was amazing to John Mundie, and pathetic, too. He felt deeply for that man whom he had so long known as proud, strong, and arbitrary, and whom he now saw so soft and feeble. He could well imagine how fearful the suffering must have been which had wrought such a revolution.

In the evening the old clerk came back to the Serjeant's resident chambers. In reply to his master's enquiries, he told him that his son's widow had become so ill that there was danger of her speedy death. He had had her removed to the hospital, and had taken the child home to his own wife.

"John," said the old lawyer, "you have been kinder to my own flesh and blood than I have been. Heaven bless you for it! 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall have mercy.' You can sleep in Charl—in the vacant room, John, and leave your door open, so as to hear me if I call."

"Yes, sir," said John, and walked off to the old room, which poor Charlie, when he was at home, used to occupy.

That night, as on the previous one, the old lawyer placed himself in his easy-chair before the fire, and gave up his mind to the terrible occurrences of the two previous days and nights. He had endeavoured to divert his thoughts to something else, with very scant success; but, as the evening came on, he ceased to struggle. He felt that it was useless; and that for the present nothing else could occupy his attention.

Though worn out by misery and fatigue, he never for a moment slept. There he sat, silent and motionless as a statue, but with his eyes open and his ears alert.

As the dreaded hour of the night—at which his son paid him that last sad visit—drew near, he began to feel sensations of terror and apprehension coming over him once more. From the moment the great old clock struck nine, his eyes never for an instant left its face. He watched the minute hand slowly making the revolution of the dial; and as it drew closer and closer to the fatal hour, his excitement grew greater and greater, until it was agonising.

At last only five minutes remained. Tick-tick, tick-tick. Slowly and more slowly the moments seemed to pass. He watched and watched, but the hand seemed stationary. It seemed to take an hour; but at last it reached three. Now, breathless with excitement, trembling with anticipation, he watched it creep on to two.

"Tap, tap, tap," sounded suddenly on the outside door.

With a face blanched and convulsed with terror the old lawyer sprang to his feet, and tried to call John. His throat and lips were so parched that they could make no sound. He tried once, he tried twice. With mind and body both paralysed, he stood there, unable to speak or move.

Suddenly the great old clock in the corner chimed out the hour loud and clear. It struck ten. Then, gasping and quivering, the Serjeant found his voice.

"John," he called out, hoarsely, "I think I heard a knock at the door. See if there's any one there."

"Yes, sir," responded John's voice.

The Serjeant heard the old clerk come out of his room and open the door. A moment afterwards he came into the sitting-room.

"No, sir," he said; "there's no one there."

"Thank you," answered the old lawyer, trying, vainly, to control the trembling of his voice. "I must have been mistaken."

Another night passed—a night of terror and agony for the old lawyer. His nerves had got thoroughly unstrung, and he could not sleep or rest. Once, worn out with fatigue, he had dozed for a moment in his chair. In that moment a fearful vision came before his sleeping eyes. His dead son as he had seen him, stark and cold, rose up before him. The phantom, though dead, was alive, for it raised its clammy hand and pointed reproachfully at him. He awoke with a scream of terror, which brought the trembling clerk hurrying into the room.

During the following day, Serjeant Stronge recovered some of his old strength and calmness. This was caused, partly, by the good news he heard, and partly by the good act he did. He heard that his son's widow was progressing favourably, and that now there was great hope of her ultimate recovery. He gave directions that every care and comfort that money could secure should be given to her. Then he did what appeared to him now in the

light of an act of reparation. He executed a will in favour of his son's widow and child. Save one thousand pounds given to his clerk and five hundred given to his laundress, all his immense fortune he bequeathed for their benefit.

His calmness, however, was not so strong as to be quite proof against any trial. As night approached, so much of his old nervousness and terror came back upon him as to make him think it wise to request John again to stop over night at his chambers.

Again the old lawyer seated himself before the fire, and again, as the hour of ten approached, he watched the great old clock. But this time he had his nerves under better control than before. He felt deeply excited, it is true; but his will, strong once more, kept the excitement in check. He was resolved that he should not, that night, let any delusions of his imagination run away with his reason.

He watched the clock with close attention. Gradually the minute hand made the revolution of the dial; his excitement grew as it approached the hour. It was now ten minutes to ten. It was now five minutes—now four—now three—now two—

"Tap, tap, tap," sounded suddenly from the outside door. He heard the knocking clearly and distinctly.

For a moment or two the old lawyer's terror was too much for him. He stood where he had sprung up when the first knock sounded, motionless and trembling. Then, with a last desperate effort of his iron will, he threw off his weakness.

"I'll be a coward no longer," he muttered to himself. "I'll show myself that this sound is the creation of my own imagination."

Nerving himself with a mighty effort, he left the room and walked down the corridor to the door. As he put out his hand to open it, the great old clock in the corner chimed out loud and clear. It struck ten.

As its last peal sounded through the chambers, the old clerk heard a scream of wildest terror, and the sound of a body falling. Rushing out of his room, he found the Serjeant lying in the corridor, opposite the open door.

Frightened half out of his wits, John lifted his master's head. To his horror and amazement the old lawyer was dead!

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durdan," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Conceit," etc.*

CHAPTER VIII. MY LITERARY MISTRESS.

EVEN now I can't look back on that dreadful time without a thrill of horror.

Policemen came into the house, and a doctor was fetched, but 'twas all no use. She was quite dead; and, of course, then there was an inquest, and all sorts of horrors; and cook, and I, and poor Miss Sophy had to give evidence, and they brought it in "unsound mind," as usual; and I really suppose the poor thing wasn't herself, or she'd never have taken her own life—and in such a dreadful way, too.

The worst of it all was that the house became what the newspapers call "notorious," and crowds of people used to come round it and gape up at the windows, and peer down the area, and it became perfectly dreadful to go in or out of the door for the remarks that were called out by these idle fools.

Of course Miss Sophy wouldn't stay there, and the furniture was all sold, and she went to live in the country with a maiden aunt; and cook took another situation, and there was nothing for me to do but to turn out again, or remain taking care of that unfortunate Number Seven.

I'm not a timid woman, nor an atom superstitious, but I must say I could not make up my mind to stay in that place by myself—especially in the kitchen where that dark stain still lay on the boards, and refused to come out, do what I might in the way of scouring and scrubbing.

I told Mrs. Jefferson so, and she said she really didn't blame me, for she didn't like it herself. I believe it was years before that house let, and then only at a very reduced rent; for it's astonishing how a tragedy like that sticks to a place, even in London. In the country, of course, it's a thousand times worse.

Mr. Jefferson meanwhile had sent me to take charge of another house; it wasn't empty, but the lady and her husband were fond of running down into the country for a few days or weeks at a time. It appears they had a tiny cottage near Caversham, and close to the river, and they spent half their time there in the summer. But the lady was an authoress, and sometimes she had to come to London on business, or to do some literary work which she said she could never settle down to in the country, as she always wanted to be out of doors, or rowing about on the river.

It was this lady who used to talk about "style." Whatever the "style" of her composition might be, her way of working was odd enough. She could only write at night, so she said, and she'd begin about eight o'clock; and sometimes, when I'd come down in the morning at six, there she was still at it. As soon as I had the fire lit and the kettle boiling, she'd drink a whole teapot of tea, eat two or three eggs, a chop, and toast enough for half-a-dozen people. Then she'd go to bed and sleep all day long. About five or six she'd get up, have a warm bath, dress, and then have another meal and commence work again; and so she'd go on till the story, or whatever it was, was finished, when she'd dash off to the cottage again, after leaving me strict orders to forward "proofs," as she called them, immediately they arrived.

It was wonderful how quick she wrote, and what a lot she did; but I often thought it wasn't a very comfortable life for her husband; and that it was a good thing she had no children.

She told me she wrote at night because she couldn't endure noise. She did not write under her own name, but had a "nom de plume," as she called it, which, of course, I'm not going to give here. She was very clever, and very popular, I believe, and a curious thing about her was that, though she had no children of her own, she wrote the sweetest children's stories it was possible to read. They were generally very pathetic, though; and often after I've sat by the fire in the kitchen crying my eyes out over some little Christmas tale that she had written—perhaps in a couple of days, or, more properly speaking, nights.

And how she could write such tales I never could imagine, for she was a very lively and light-hearted woman to all appearance; and yet her stories always made me cry. I was very happy and very comfortable at this place, though my mistress was a bit erratic, and would dash up to town in the most sudden, unexpected way, and worry my life out about her "proofs," and things, and had such funny sorts of meals.

She used to tell me most amusing things about people she knew—"the Bohemians of literature," she called them; and about critics, and the way reviews were done; and the different publishers, and how they all tried to get everything they could out of authors for next to nothing, and always wanted to bind them down for a term of years, if there was any probability of their being successful; and how, even if they were making thousands out of a book, and had paid the author fifty pounds for it, they'd never dream of giving him a penny more than the original agreement held them to.

Her husband was an artist, but not a very successful one, and she had to depend on her own earnings chiefly to keep up the household.

They always spent the winter in town, but in the summer they lived as much as possible at the cottage, so the place suited me very well. I think it was there I picked up so much knowledge about composition and literature generally, and sometimes when mistress was in a very good temper and had just had a big cheque, or just finished a book that pleased her, she

would chat away to me for an hour at a time in the pleasantest way possible; and she lent me lots of books, so that I got to know Dickens, Thackeray, Lytton, and Scott, just like friends—not to mention heaps of modern authors, some of whom my mistress knew very well, and who'd come to the house, and, I must say, generally looked and behaved very unlike what their books had led me to expect.

I said as much one day to Mrs. Cray, and she laughed very heartily.

"Celebrities are always disappointing," she said. "They ought never to come out of their shells. Genius should be to the world what a mistress is to her lover—something to adore in solitude and silence—something that has its shrine and temple undecorated by glance or touch that would make it common property to the idle and the curious."

She talked beautifully sometimes, did Mrs. Cray. For all the world like the people in books, and I'd often go away and write down the clever things she'd say because I thought it a pity they should be wasted.

In the winter-time they had supper parties every Sunday night, and generally a great many gentlemen came—some were critics, and some were journalists, and some were actors, and some were artists. The ladies were mostly literary; some were noisy and fast, and smoked cigarettes and drank brandies and sodas for all the world like the men. They'd all sit down to supper about ten o'clock, and then would not get up from the table till twelve or one in the morning. I used to wait on them until it came to near midnight, and mistress, who was always kind and considerate, would say: "Now you may go to bed, Jane," and then I'd have to leave the room.

I was often sorry to do so, for they'd talk so wittily and amusingly, besides discussing all sorts of topics of the day—religious, philosophical, political, speculative—that it was as good as being at any theatre to hear them.

I remember once they were talking about some man, who had made rather a stir in the literary world by a brilliant satirical poem that had appeared in a society paper.

No one seemed quite to know who he was; and Mrs. Cray, who loved celebrities and adored genius, so she said, was quite crazy to find out his real name.

They all called him "Rex," which was

how he had signed the poem, and a few brilliant little sketches that satirised society very unmercifully, but yet were skillful enough to please more than offend.

"Some one must bring him here," said Mrs. Cray, in her quick, impetuous fashion. "I'm dying to know him. You know I can always detect genius, and I scent it here. He's a man, and young, and he believes in himself and his powers, and will do something great one of these days."

"Unless a woman gets hold of him," growled a grey-headed old journalist. "He hasn't met his fate yet, or he'd never have written 'Delilah.'"

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Cray, laughing, "when he does meet her she'll make him pay for that scathing criticism. Now, to my thinking, it is because he has 'met his fate,' as you call it, that he writes so bitterly."

"After all, they are not his own ideas," said a sour-looking man, critic to one of the leading "dailies." "The same thing has been said over and over again. We know our world; we each fancy we know our epoch; and then we think the knowledge is novel because it's just come home to us individually. Who wants to be told that our age is artificial by a young coxcomb who, doubtless, imagines that the whole world knows he has taken his degree, whereas his College and his own relations are all whom it concerns?"

"You think he is young, then?" said Mrs. Cray.

"His writings prove that," growled her companion. "He has faith still in ideals, in instincts, in purity, and singleness of thought."

"You forget," she said with unconscious irony, "that he is a poet."

There was a general laugh.

"A poet," said another woman, "is a pilgrim who always has a pebble in his shoes. He must have a grievance before he can versify. Give me a cigarette, Donald. Have Scotch women learnt to smoke yet?"

The sandy-haired young Scot addressed as "Donald" looked up and laughed, as he complied with the request.

"No," he said; "at least not in my part of the country. Maybe, in Edinboro' they've learnt it's a guid thing in its way."

"In modera—tion," drawled the fair smoker, mimicking his accent, "just as they court a kiss. Do you know the story

of the couple who had been engaged six or seven years before the lover remembered he had such a privilege?"

"But the crown of the joke," said Mrs. Cray, "was that he and his intended knelt down and 'asked a blessing' on the ceremony first. Fie on you, Donald! Who would seek a lover among such a cold-blooded crew?"

"Oh," stammered the young Scot, getting hot and red at the unusual attention he was exciting, "if it comes to anecdotes, one country is as queer as any other. The English and Irish are no ways behind us; only it's the fashion nowadays to make fun of the Scotch. I'm not going to say we don't deserve it," he added. "Still it's nonsense to say a Scotchman never laughs, a Scotchman never sees a joke, a Scotchman only eats porridge, drinks whisky, and knows the full value of saxe-pence."

"Scotland and Ireland," observed Mrs. Cray, "are the only two countries fairly represented by anecdote. You get at the character of the inhabitants with a fair amount of accuracy by simply reading or hearing the stories, that are essentially characteristic, as well as historic. They are told and written, too, with such simplicity and good faith, that one cannot help regarding them as genuine. I had a Scotchman in my last novel," she went on, puffing at a cigarette she had just lighted, "so I had to read up manners and customs a bit, in order to hit him off accurately."

"Mrs. Cray's confessions are always so delightfully frank," observed the critic. "They are made for the purpose of disarming criticism, just as one scotches the head of a snake in order to remove its fangs. However, the Scotch are losing so much of their ancient characteristics, that it would have done just as well if you had made your hero an Englishman, with a Scotch name, and a manner of preternatural gravity."

"I brought him up on porridge and potatoes," she continued. "I've always heard that the greatest men of their country had to support themselves by 'bursers,' whatever that may be, and live on porridge as the staple article of diet during their student days. Isn't that so, Donald?"

"Well, I'll not go so far as to deny it altogether," he answered.

"Observe," interposed the critic. "Caution, the first and chiefest Scottish virtue, is coming out in this young man. No wonder his country abounds in lawyers!

When people are so horribly afraid of committing themselves to a decided statement, a third person must necessarily arbitrate for them. Sandy, my boy, drink some whisky, and then pass it down. You'll never do anything better than that speech if you try all night."

Then, I'm sorry to say, mistress sent me off to bed; and I heard no more, except that about midnight I was awake out of my first sleep by hearing the young Scotchman's voice singing "Auld Lang Syne" in rather uproarious fashion, and concluded that he had been paying his respects to his national beverage with more ardour than discretion.

CHAPTER IX. "DON'T DEFY FATE."

It might have been a fortnight or so after this discussion that Mrs. Cray said to me one Sunday, as I was laying the supper-table: "Only a small party to-night, Jane, but they're all 'somebodies.' And I've two new guests coming whom I've been very anxious to know. One is a barrister—a very clever, rising young man—the other, who lives with him, and who is his chosen chum and friend, is a new writer. Every one has been talking about him, and I'm quite proud to think he's coming here for he's most difficult to get hold of, and never goes anywhere."

I knew then that she'd gained her end, and got acquainted with the young poet about whom they'd all been talking that Sunday evening I wrote of in my last chapter.

That was one of the evenings I made notes of—and I flatter myself they read very well, and almost as good as a real book, which I hope this may be one day, though with what I know of publishers and the difficulties of authorship, I'm inclined to be doubtful.

I don't think I've ever described Mrs. Cray, so I may as well do it here, for on that Sunday night she looked very well—almost handsome.

She was tall and very fair, with a beautiful figure; but she was generally so careless in her dress that she merely conveyed a general sense of untidiness. Her features were not good, and her eyes were that shade of grey-blue, which never have much expression, unless they go with dark lashes; but when she came down to the drawing-room, the night I'm speaking of, dressed in black velvet, and with her soft, fair hair coiled about her head, and her

cheeks flushed with excitement, she really looked, as I said before, quite handsome.

Usually she left the supper-table and arrangements all to me; but on this night she fussed about as I'd never seen her do, and was most particular about the flowers and the lights, and that the table should look "artistic."

"People have a general idea," she said, "that literary women know nothing about housekeeping. I want my new guests to see that I can do other things besides writing books."

Just then the bell rang, so she took herself off to the drawing-room, and I went to the front door. A hansom was just driving off, and on the steps stood two gentlemen in evening-dress. One—the younger and slighter of the two—had his overcoat hanging over his arm, and as he faced me with the gaslight full upon him, I thought I had never seen such a handsome face.

He was quite young. I should say not more than two or three and twenty. As he stepped into the hall and took off his hat, I saw that he was rather fair, with blue eyes and dark, curling lashes. His hair made a rippled edge above the smooth white brows, and curled close and crisp round his head. The thick, soft, auburn moustache hid his mouth, but I noticed at supper that it was small and finely cut—a little scornful and sarcastic, perhaps, but no woman could have found fault with it, I'm very sure.

The chin somewhat marred a face that was in other respects almost perfect—it betrayed weakness and irresolution. Indeed, I've heard his own sex say that the whole face betrayed that, and was only "femininely pretty." But they were usually very ugly and ill-favoured men who made the remark, and I think Mr. Tresyllion himself would have excused them.

He wasn't an atom conceited; and I'm sure he well might have been, for every woman in the room that night made no secret of her admiration, and I heard more than one whisper to my mistress:

"Who is the young Adonis, Pauline?"

Of course when they heard that he was the new author, there was quite an excitement; and if many people made the fuss over him that the Crays' friends did, I thought he'd very soon be spoilt.

His manners were delightful. Frank, easy, graceful, with no touch of self-consciousness. He sat next to my mistress

at supper, and I noticed how interested and animated she was.

"He has such perfect manners," she said to me afterwards, "and manners, alas! to the young man of the period, seem a forgotten art. I wish they would remember that to women they are the charm and touchstone of good breeding. We could excuse a man's ugliness sooner than his want of politeness or courtesy in the smallest matters."

I enjoyed waiting at table that evening. It was a pity no shorthand writer was there to take down the jests, and repartees, and the general conversation as it skimmed along over topics of general or particular interest. Art and literature, manners and morals, religion and science all came in for a fair share of discussion; but so rapidly and brilliantly did the ball fly from one to another that I could not possibly do justice to the speakers, so I must let the task alone.

I remember hearing Mrs. Cray saying something to Mr. Tresyllion about his much discussed poem "Delilah." She was leaning back in her chair, the light falling softly from the rose-shaded lamps on her fair, flushed face and animated eyes.

He looked at her admiringly as she spoke; her voice low, eager, rapid, as if the subject interested and engrossed her.

"You pay me the compliment of having understood, as well as read my sketch," he said at last. "I think you are the first woman who has done that. I'm sorry we don't agree though about the ending."

"It was so merciless," she said. "And I should not think you were hard, or cruel of nature. You are too young to have had such an experience as you depict. From whence, then, did you draw it?"

"Imagination, of course," he said. "You surely do not mean to say that one must go only to experience for the truths of life? I have read your books, and when I look at you——"

"Don't," she said, laughing a little. "I've heard that so often. They are so tragic, and I—so—very much the opposite. Just as if one doesn't write by intuition. As if one's own surface views were everything. Perhaps it is because my own nature is light, that I love to depict tragedy; because I can laugh and jest with such ease, that I turn to my pictured sorrows as a relief."

"I should not think your nature was

light—far from it," he said gravely; and I saw their eyes meet, and a quick hot flush flamed in her cheek as her glance drew itself slowly and reluctantly away. For a moment they were silent. Then suddenly she bent a little nearer to him. "Tell me," she said softly, "why you wrote 'Delilah.' Didn't you feel her sex would look upon it as a sort of public challenge?"

"No," he said, evidently surprised. "I wrote it because I felt it. As a picture of the woman who laughs and jests, and cheats her lover, and takes all life can give, and to whom Death means—the end. What else could it be to such a woman? What has she in common with heaven or hell? She is absolutely soulless, absolutely irresponsible. She loved; but love was a jest. Even so must be her eternity."

"Oh," said Mrs. Cray, with a little shiver, "that is horribly cynical. You speak as if she had been a dead butterfly, a pretty insect created but for an hour of sunlight and summer. And you are such a boy—it is not right. Has no woman taught you better than that?"

"No," he said, briefly; "I don't think any woman ever will."

Just for a second's space she lifted her eyes from the grapes on her plate, and flashed one look at the beautiful, boyish face.

"Don't defy fate," she said, softly. "You may live to repent it, as others have done before you."

"You mean," he said, "there are women, and women. Yes, I know; but most of them are the type of my Delilah—sleek, soft, caressing—ready to love if love be of fair promise; a summer day's idyl; utterly incapable of facing a storm, an adverse wind, a breath of trouble, or disappointment."

"You will tell me a different tale some day," she said, lightly. "You are young yet—a tyro in love's arts. Wait and see what fate has in store for you."

"I mean to," he said, laughing gaily. "I am in no hurry, I assure you, to taste of the 'bitter reality' that love is to life, according to your books."

"You seem to know them very well," she said, with evident gratification. "Have I really said that?"

"Yes, I know them all very well. I can't tell you how pleased I felt when my friend Grant told me he would bring me here to-night. I had so often wondered what you were like?"

"And am I what you supposed?"

"No," he said. "Somehow, I always pictured you dark, small, rather sad-looking—a woman with a history sort of face."

"Ah," she said, shortly; "I always say it is a mistake to draw fancy portraits of people from their works, of whatever kind. One is always disillusioned rapidly when one sees the originals."

"Pardon me," he said, "I never surely conveyed that."

Again their eyes met, again she laughed, but there was a constrained ring about the usually clear note of her merriment.

I did not like to hear it; I did not like the interest she betrayed so openly, and yet so unconsciously.

She scarcely looked at or spoke to any one else that whole evening. She seemed perfectly engrossed with this young poet.

When the supper-party broke up they went into the drawing-room, and I heard music and singing, and one voice struck me particularly. Indeed, I sat at the foot of the stairs and listened out of sheer delight.

Mrs. Cray told me next day it was Rex Tresyllion who had sung. She called him that quite naturally. I think he was one of those men to whose name very few people affix "Mr."

She spoke of him a good deal. "He is very clever," she said. "I wonder what he will do with his life; or rather"—and she laughed a little bitterly—"what woman will do with it for him. That is more to the point. He is just of the temperament to suffer. Passionate, poetic, impulsive, wilful, and with that face," she added softly.

"You seem to admire his looks, ma'am," I said. "Take care or you will make him conceited."

She looked at me sharply.

"I always study faces," she said, "especially if they describe well. Besides, they are an index to character."

"If Mr. Tresyllion's character is as good as his looks," I said, "he must be very perfect indeed."

"Oh, he's not—that," she said quickly. "I should think he has plenty of faults."

Then she left the room and went up the stairs, singing softly to herself the air of that little Italian song which Mr. Tresyllion had sung the previous night.

SOME FOGS.

If anybody could be found responsible for a London fog, that person would pass under the universal reprobation of about

four millions and a quarter of human beings. There are people who enjoy a good snowstorm; others, who are their merriest in a hard, sharp frost. We even pray for rain sometimes, but that is for the sake of our country neighbours, and a blazing, sultry sunshine has its admirers. But who has a good word to say for fog?

Fog generally comes upon us in the night, and with very little warning. Long before daylight, as the workmen's trains are steaming off to the City, their progress is marked by loud explosions from the fog-signals; and more fortunate mortals, who are not obliged to be abroad so early, turn uneasily upon their pillows, hearing the uncanny sounds, and mutter dismally, "Fog!" As day begins to break, a glance from the window reveals an outlook upon a dim, unsubstantial void—nothing visible but perhaps the nearest corner of your own garden wall, and that but a formless blotch of shadow. And yet, such as it is, the mist is white, and sweet, and pure, probably a regular country mist it may be, or perhaps a sea-fog that has rolled over from the banks of Newfoundland, or from who knows where. As the morning advances, there rises an incense from hundreds and thousands of hearths. Every domestic chimney contributes its quota. There are the pyres innumerable of wood and coal, of shavings, or old newspapers, and smoke goes up in thick clouds all along the line of London's thousands of miles of streets. On fine days all this fume rises and is dispersed in the boundless ether, on wet days it is cleansed and purified by the descending rain, but on foggy days it is caught and entangled in a network of vaporous particles, and helps to form the gloomy pall that spreads over the vast city. And then, instead of daylight, we have twilight; a solemn spectral twilight blending with a deeper, inkier gloom. In all this darkness goes on the infinite movement of the great city—trains hooting dolefully; lines of vehicles crawling slowly onwards; voices sounding in the air, cries and shouts of drivers, all invisible; dim ghosts of foot passengers stealing cautiously along; nebulous lights appearing and vanishing; all is ghostly and indefinite at the best, and at the worst the horrible darkness and confusion become something appalling.

That household fire lighting has most to do with the darkest part of the morning's clouds of smoke, may be taken for granted. There is no Smoke Prevention Act in force

against the domestic hearth; and if any such were passed it would be necessarily inoperative. But, although London is not the special seat of any great manufacture, yet there are myriads of industries of various kinds which help to swell the general volume of smoke. For a foggy morning, what more appropriate object of study than the police report on the carrying out of the Smoke Acts?

Here are upwards of a hundred and thirty different trades and manufactures, of which some members—in some cases, many members—have been reported for causing smoke nuisances in a single year. Bakers and confectioners are, as might be expected, the chief offenders in point of numbers, although, perhaps their offences are of a mild degree of turpitude; and, indeed, the fume from a baker's oven, on a bleak frosty morning, is sometimes not at all unpleasant. Breweries are not absolutely immaculate; and brass and ironfounders, and engineers, generally, possess chimneys and know how to use them.

Then there are lead-works, lampblack manufactures, oil refiners, and varnish and colour works, with tanners, turners, and tripe dressers, with their varied fumes. Printing works, glass works, chemical works, soap works, can hardly be carried on without a little smoke; and fat melters and gelatine makers may be supposed to furnish their own appropriate essences to the general imbroglio.

These are but a sample culled at random. But take the "Post Office Directory," go through the list of trades—varied, almost exhaustless—and consider whether each and every one has not some little contribution to add to the sum total of London's atmosphere. Why, even the "manufacture of smoke-consuming apparatus" figures in the bill as having but imperfectly carried out its own processes.

And then there is the consideration that, after all, the visible part of smoke is really the most innocuous. Its blackness is caused by innumerable particles of unconsumed carbon. Well, carbon is not a poison at all; it is rather, in one form or other, the staff of life, and the infinitesimal quantity we swallow, on even a foggy day, is not likely to do us a morsel of harm. But the combustion of coal liberates also volatile oils of one kind or another, which, rising with the smoke, pervade the watery particles of the original fog with a film of impalpable thinness. And it is this greasy nature of the fog which probably prevents

its ready evaporation. Anyhow, here is the fog and here it remains, a sort of cover or extinguisher, under which London is half smothered; for, in addition to the smoke of houses, the varied fumes, visible and invisible, of all sorts of trades and manufactures, there is the vitiated air, exhausted by the breath of from four to five millions of human beings, to say nothing of the vast array of horses and other animals, which all help to consume oxygen.

These conditions are reproduced in most large cities, which have their fogs, too, no doubt; but these, by general consent, are neither so dense nor so lasting as your real London fog. And yet Paris, where coal has come into almost universal use, replacing charcoal and firewood within the last thirty years—even Paris, whose journalists make a mock of the fogs of London, has its dark days, when its atmosphere rivals in "pea-soup" thickness that of our own metropolis. But there must be something in the site and soil of London that renders it peculiarly liable to these visitations; for we shall find that a London fog is no new thing, but that it has a respectable pedigree and ancestors, dating at least from the days of Tudors and Stuarts.

Is it the fault of the "London basin," as geologists call it?—though saucer would give a more correct idea of the site, or, perhaps, with the fog in our mind's eye, soup-plate might be a more appropriate term. Now, the London basin is thickly lined with clay, and capable of holding a good deal of moisture; and, as well as the winding course of the Thames, it contains the beds of many tributary streams, all of which go "fogging" under suitable atmospheric conditions. But Father Thames himself is often unjustly blamed in this connection. Where the tide flows and ebbs—that is, between Teddington and the Nore—the river itself produces very little vapour. When there is a general fog in the Channel, it is pretty thick about Thames Mouth; but the sea-fog rarely comes to town by way of the river. We do get the sea-fog, but it generally comes down the river with a westerly or south-westerly breeze, and it is probably a regular Atlantic fog, which comes cruising up the Bristol Channel, and finding a short cut between the Severn and Thames, rolls down the valley of the latter river, and after its long journey finds a quiet resting-place in the "London basin."

In a general way, London may be

absolved from the charge of producing its own fogs. Its area is well-drained, and covered with streets and buildings, and its atmosphere is usually drier and warmer than that of the country round about. But the innocent white fog that comes up from the country gets sadly sophisticated and corrupted by its sojourn in London streets. Sulphuric-acid gas, carbonic acid, and carbonic oxide, are reported as part of the constituents of this pleasant mixture, which is responsible for a considerable increase in the number of deaths, when once it has taken possession of our streets. But fogs of limited area may sometimes be incubated in our London parks. Regent's Park is said to be the worst offender in this respect, its drainage leaving much to be desired in the way of improvement. And on autumnal mornings—say in the small hours thereof—there is often a considerable show of white vapour, which rolls forth from the open area of Hyde Park and from the standing waters of the Serpentine.

To leave the fogs of the present day for a while, and in a literal sense to search into the mists of antiquity; we shall find occasional mention of great fogs in the old monkish chronicles. In the year 797 there were seventeen days of unusual darkness, which was evidently of a foggy origin. And A D 1140, in Lent, the sun was darkened, and about noontide men lighted candles to eat by. In 1176 the sun in September, about noontide, was "darkened for the space of two hours together, without eclipse or cause natural," except fog. Again in 1391 we find "the sun darkened with gross and evil-favoured clouds," which description might well apply to a London fog of our own times.

But although these notices are infrequent, we need not suppose that the fogs themselves were. A winter fog of the ordinary kind would no more be recorded than a rainy day in November, or a frost after Christmas; it is only when the gloom becomes something awful and portentous, that it finds its way into history. And when we come to the seventeenth century, and people begin to keep diaries, such notices become more frequent. Pepys, to be sure, is silent as to fogs; but the worthy Admiralty clerk is not observant as to natural phenomena. And there was one great fog in London in August, 1663, of which we learn from other sources, but of which Pepys says not a word. But John Evelyn, who was a countryman and a

meteorologist in his way, records two great fogs. One of December the fifteenth, 1670, "the thickest and darkest fog on the Thames ever known in the memory of man, and I happened to be in the very midst of it."

Again, under the date of the fifteenth of November, 1699, Evelyn writes: "There happened this week so thick a mist and fog, that people lost their way in the streets; it became so intense, that no light of candles or torches yielded any—or but very little—direction. I was in it, and in danger. Robberies were committed between the very lights which were fixed between London and Kensington on both sides, and whilst coaches and travellers were passing. It began about four in the afternoon, and was quite gone by eight, without any wind to disperse it. At the Thames they beat drums to direct the watermen to make the shore." Now if John Evelyn, who was only an occasional visitor to London, and who spent the greatest part of his time either at Sayes Court or Wotton, managed to be present in two London fogs of the densest character, it seems probable that these were of not infrequent occurrence in this season of the year.

Again, in 1730, there was a great fog in London, during which many lives were lost by accidents. But there is little mention of it in contemporary memoirs, and we may presume that even then such London fogs were regarded as but ordinary events.

But a most extraordinary fog, which excited general misgiving and alarm, occurred in the year 1783; and far from being confined to London, or even England, spread over the whole continent of Europe, and covered the Mediterranean Sea with part of the African continent. Continental observers recorded that the fog began on the eighteenth of June, and that it lasted beyond the middle of July. In the higher regions of the Alps, as well as among the low lying flats of Holland, the fog was equally prevalent. There was no escaping from it anywhere. The sun, when visible, appeared as a pale, watery orb, which could be looked at without blinking. Gilbert White, in his delightful "History of Selborne," describes the summer as "amazing and portentous with alarming meteors and tremendous thunderstorms," and "a peculiar haze or smoky fog in this island and Europe." According to the worthy Vicar of Selborne, the fog lasted from June the

twenty-third to July the twentieth ; and he describes "the sun, at noon, as blank as a clouded moon, and shed a rust-coloured light." At rising and setting its hue was lurid and blood-coloured. At the same time the season was marked by intense heat ; meat turned putrid almost as soon as it was killed, and swarms of flies infested all the country. Abroad, there were terrible earthquake shocks and volcanic eruptions, and many people imagined that the very end of the world was at hand. And yet the general effect of the fog was rather beneficial than otherwise ; the corn filled out and ripened under its influence ; the harvest that followed was abundant ; the vintage was good ; and it seemed as if some vivifying and restorative element had been added to the atmosphere.

In the early part of the present century, when London, although a considerable city, had not attained a third of its present proportions, fogs of great density are frequently reported. A thick fog set in on the twenty-seventh of December, 1813, which lasted for eight days, and was succeeded by a great fall of snow that stopped all communications north and west of London. After the snow came a bitter frost, and by the middle of January, 1814, London Bridge was choked with ice and snow, and barges and boats could no longer navigate the river. By the beginning of February, the river could be crossed on foot from bank to bank. A shabby kind of fair was subsequently held on the ice. A very ragged field of ice, as described by an eye witness, consisting of masses of drifted ice, of every shape and size, covered with snow and frozen together. That winter there was snow on Hindhead fifteen feet thick. Coaches were snowed up ; and all the incidents of a good old-fashioned winter were repeated, "with advantages."

From this period the fog record is amply filled up, and the notices of the fogs of sixty and seventy years ago might easily be transferred to those of to-day. As for instance, in 1829, November the eighteenth :

"Extremely thick fogs. At ten o'clock the coachmen on the road were unable to see the heads of their horses, which they were often obliged to lead."

In 1828, November the twelfth :

"Fog began to thicken very much about half-past twelve, from which time till nearly two the effect was most distressing, making the eyes smart, and almost suffocating those who were in the street, particularly asthmatic persons."

And on December, 1829 :

"Shops lighted as at night, and the horses of stages coming into town were led."

After all it is not encouraging to find that the London fog is such an old-established institution, for there seems to be the less probability of ever getting rid of it. And yet the evil is hardly on the increase. In the City especially, everybody who knew it twenty or thirty years ago, must be pleasantly surprised by its improved atmosphere. It is in the suburbs now that the air is the heavier and thicker, and people leaving their homes in the darkness and gloom of a thick fog, frequently find, as they approach their destination in the City, that something like the light of day is shining among the tall monumental buildings, with the fog suspended, as it were, from their summits. And it is pretty certain that wide streets, broad avenues, clear paved spaces, by aiding the free circulation of air, help to deprive the fog of its most noxious elements.

As the fog arrives so it departs, suddenly, in silence and mystery ; it may have fallen as dew, or it may hang congealed in a thousand beautiful forms of hoar frost from every twig and branch of tree and shrub, and covering prosaic area railings with a film of frosted silver. Or it may vanish in the roar of winds, and the quick rush of storm-clouds, or rise invisibly into the empyrean, disclosing everywhere the shining stars.

FEMALE GAMBLERS.

WHEN Pope came to the conclusion that every woman was at heart a rake, he was probably much nearer the truth than the majority of sentimental young men would give him credit for. There are, of course, many exceptions to be found amongst "Nature's agreeable blunders," but it will, we think, be conceded that, speaking generally, a woman has much greater faith in luck than a man ; and had she the same opportunities for speculation which the sterner sex have, it is not probable she would hesitate to "back" her belief with the coin of the realm.

As a matter of fact, some cases which appeared in the police-court reports a little time ago seem to prove that, given the opportunity to bet, a woman will utilise it with but little regard for the possible con-

sequences. She seldom stops to ascertain the bona fides of the person with whom she bets. To "get on" a certain horse is her main object. She does not stop to enquire whether the particular bookmaker with whom she invests is reliable or otherwise, and her implicit faith in the honesty of others leaves her an easy victim to the wiles of the welsher.

An illustrative instance of this sweet simplicity was brought to light in one of the London police-courts some time ago. A well-dressed young woman applied to the magistrate for advice. A postman had given her the "straight tip" for a particular race, and she snapped at the bait with avidity. As it turned out, the "tip" was an actual certainty, for the horse had already run and won the race when she made the bet with an ingenuous bookmaker. When a bookmaker makes a bet in this fashion, knowing that the horse against which he wagers has already won the race, it may be safely assumed that he has no intention of refunding the money staked. In this case, of course, the bookmaker disappeared, and the young woman was left to mourn her monetary loss.

Quite recently, too, no less a personage than Mrs. Langtry—than whom there are few more business-like women—had to suffer a trifling loss in connection with a horse-race. At the Monmouth Park (United States) races she backed a horse "for a place," and was successful in winning thirteen dollars—on paper. The person whom she authorised to collect her winnings, pocketed the money and absconded, and Mrs. Langtry was effectually welshed.

Notwithstanding the fact that women are far too excitable for a business which requires the utmost coolness at all times, whether the gambler be winning or losing, there are facts on record which prove that there have been instances in which women have evinced all the necessary dispassionateness which successful gambling entails. In Plutarch's "Life of Artaxerxes," an incident related of Queen Parysatis, furnishes a case in point. In those days (about four hundred years before Christ) gaming with dice was a fashionable pastime at the Persian Court, and as Queen Parysatis wished to revenge the murder of her favourite son, who had been slain by a slave named Merabates, by the order of Artaxerxes, she determined to utilise her well-known skill at the dice to accomplish the cherished revenge. One day, there-

fore, she induced the King to play with her for a thousand darics (about five hundred pounds), and purposely allowed Artaxerxes to win. After losing the game Queen Parysatis played for a slave; the winner to select the slave which he or she required. The Queen won; chose Merabates; tortured and killed him, and thus satiated her revenge.

Among the ladies of ancient Greece and Rome, there was but little tendency to any description of gambling. As a rule, the Grecian and Roman women were too deeply interested in their domestic concerns to devote time or energy to a business the very nature of which necessitated absolute singleness of purpose, and the complete annihilation of family cares. Even when the Roman women were corrupted under the baneful rule of Nero, they seldom or ever acquired the vice of gambling. Except during the festival of the Bona Dea, betting on any event or game was but little practised, and even then the individual sums risked were comparatively trifling.

French ladies, unfortunately, have not always followed the good example of the women of Greece and Rome. At first, indeed, when French women began to succumb to gambling attractions, public opinion was so antagonistic to the departure that gaming ventures were carried out in the most secret manner possible. During the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, however, gambling transactions were conducted on a bolder scale, and under Louis the Fifteenth heavy betting was indulged in by French ladies with but little regard for the opinion of Mrs. Grundy. At the close of the eighteenth century gamestresses were as plentiful as blackberries, especially so among the higher classes, and their play was frequently characterised by unfairness and bare-faced cheating. Yet in spite of their cheating propensities, the ladies were often losers. The reverse of fortune frequently reduced high-born dames to beggary, a condition which induced them to sacrifice not only their honour, but that of their daughters as well, in order to pay their gambling debts. As an illustration of the degrading position to which gambling may reduce women, the case of the Countess of Schwiechelt, one of the beauties of the opening years of the present century, is instructive. The Countess was much given to gambling, and while in Paris, on one occasion, she lost fifty thousand livres. Being unable to

pay, she actually planned a robbery at the house of one of her friends—Madame Demidoff. Madame Demidoff was the fortunate possessor of a remarkably fine coronet of emeralds. The Countess of Schwiechalt by some means found out where it was kept, and at a ball given by Madame Demidoff she managed to steal it. The theft was discovered, and the Countess adequately punished. Many influential friends tried hard to have her punishment mitigated, but Bonaparte was inexorable, and left her to her fate.

In England, as in France, the passion for gambling has often reduced women of the noblest birth to the lowest depths of depravity. From allusions in old plays such as "The Provoked Husband," and from Walpole's "Letters" and other publications, it is evident that the sacrifice of honour was not an infrequent method of paying gambling debts. The stakes were generally high, and the debts incurred were a first charge on the sensitiveness of the unfortunate lady players:

So tender these—if debts crowd fast upon her
She'll pawn her virtue to preserve her honour.

Hogarth, in his picture entitled "Piquet, or Virtue in Danger," realised exactly the female gambler's fall; and his truthfulness was amply testified to by frequent occurrences in actual life. A single illustration of these may suffice. A lady was married while very young to an English noble. Ere long she was introduced to a professional gamestress, was led into play, and lost more in a single night than ever she could hope to pay. Her honour paid the debt. Soon afterwards the gambler's boasts revealed the truth to the lady's husband, and a duel was the necessary result. The gambler was shot dead by the injured husband, after which the latter actually offered to pardon his wife, and wished to restore her to her former position. The wife refused, gave herself up entirely to gambling and its consequences, and the husband died of a broken heart.

The stakes for which ladies played during the closing years of the eighteenth and the opening years of the present century, were often of considerable magnitude. In 1776, a lady in a fashionable quarter of London lost, at a single sitting—according to the "Annual Register"—no less than three thousand guineas at loo; and at Lady Buckinghamshire's faro table in Saint James's Square, there were often enormous sums lost in play.

Lady Buckinghamshire, it may be re-

marked, was, perhaps, the most notorious gamestress of her day. She actually slept with a pair of pistols and a blunderbuss by her side for the protection of her cherished bank. Her career, however, was a somewhat chequered one. In the "Times," for March the thirteenth, 1797, there is a police-court report which goes to show that Lady Buckinghamshire's speculations were not always free from worry. A couple of days prior to the appearance of the report her ladyship, together with Lady E. Luttrell and a Mrs. Sturt, was brought up at the Marlborough Street police-court and fined fifty pounds for playing at faro; while Henry Martindale, her manager, was mulcted in two hundred pounds.

Later in the same year her croupier got into trouble through the disappearance of the cash-box. Awkward stories of stolen purses, snuff-boxes, and cloaks began to be told, and, finally, Martindale became a bankrupt to the tune of three hundred and twenty-eight thousand pounds, besides "debts of honour" to the amount of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

Lady Buckinghamshire, by the way, was not the only titled dame of the olden days who not only gambled, but kept gaming establishments. One of these professional gamestresses actually applied to the House of Lords for protection against police intrusion, on the plea that she was a peeress of Great Britain:

"I, Dame Mary, Baroness of Mordington," ran the petition, "do hold a house in the Great Piazza, Covent Garden, for, and as an assembly, where all persons of credit are at liberty to frequent and play at such diversions as are used at other assemblies . . . and I demand all those privileges that belong to me as a peeress of Great Britain, appertaining to my said assembly."

The House of Lords very properly refused her request.

Among the many stories told about the ruling passion of gambling being strong in death, that recorded by Goldsmith will bear repetition, as it happens to refer to a female gambler. The story goes that an old lady, having been given up by the doctors, played with the curate of the parish "pour passer le temps." Having won all his money, she suggested that they should play for the funeral charges to which she would be liable. Just as she began the game death claimed its own, and as "time!" was called, the game was a drawn one.

A similar submission to the ruling pas-

sion was evinced by the gamemstress who, in the ordinary course of her religious duties, went to confess to her priest. Her confessor, among other arguments against the lady's favourite vice, expatiated on the loss of valuable time which gambling occasioned. "Ah," said the penitent with a sigh, "that is exactly what vexes me—so much time is lost in the shuffling of the cards!"

In the lower ranks of English life the passion for gambling is by no means confined to the male sex. In 1776, the barrow women in London were in the habit of carrying dice, which they induced their boy and girl customers to throw for fruit and nuts. The evil grew to such an extent, that the Lord Mayor took action in the matter, and put a stop to it for a time.

But the profession of female bookmaker is by no means extinct even now. In certain districts in London, Liverpool, and other large towns, may still be seen the "lady" professional taking bets, ranging from a penny upwards, from women and children, who never saw a horse-race in their lives, and who can have but the remotest idea of the pros and cons of the event on which they bet. Their book-making, of course, is done in the most primitive and unostentatious manner, yet it is hardly likely that the police are altogether ignorant of the methods of these female gamblers. If aware of them, it seems somewhat strange that efforts have not been made to annihilate one of the worst phases of street gambling.

Among the higher circles of the present day, the same gaming propensity is visible to those who choose to look for it.

Ladies are not ashamed to run horses under assumed names; nor is it an uncommon event to see some of the prettiest flowers of Society settling up with a bookmaker in the most business-like manner. That the proceeding enhances their attractiveness few would care to assert, and among men whose appreciation is worth having, the opinion is gradually growing that a female gambler is by no means an ornament to her sex.

GREETING AND FAREWELL.

I HEAR it in the soft wind on the moorland,
I hear it in the ocean's ceaseless swell,
I hear it in the raindrops' weary plashing:
"Nothing is left but greeting and farewell."

Only a year ago, one year, my darling,
'Twas here we lingered, passion's tale to tell;
Only a year, and all around unaltered,
Yet nothing left but greeting and farewell.

If fate had whispered, up upon the headland,
While on the heather affluent sunshine fell;
Where happy Nature echoed back our gladness,
"Nothing is left but greeting and farewell."

Why, we had laughed, a careless, fearless laughter
At aught that dared such treason to foretell.
Did we not love, for life, for death, for ever?
Now, what is left but greeting and farewell?

Oh, happy seabirds "shouting" o'er the surges,
Oh, butterflies that danced adown the dell.
Oh, summer blossoms that we gave each other!
Nothing is left but greeting and farewell.

The brown bees might have hummed a requiem for us,
The breakers moaned to mock a funeral knell.
Had cruel Nature not a note of warning,
That naught was left but greeting and farewell?

Nay, better so. We have one bloom eternal,
To hide away in Memory's deepest cell.
That day was full of golden joy, unbroken,
Though it left nothing for us but—farewell.

So let us clasp cold fingers frank and freely,
Let the low tones no bitter reckoning tell;
It is not we, but life and time that part us.
Nothing is left but greeting and farewell!

THE BEGINNINGS OF CAMBRIDGE.

CAMBRIDGE is not so much of a town as Oxford. A few of the colleges are finer. England has nothing else like the Great Court of Trinity; and quaint, stately Neville's Court, in the same college, is like a glorified edition of the cloister of Hampton Court Palace. Clare, too, is pretty and complete; as you look down on it from the roof of King's Chapel you think that you could move it bodily as they do hotels in America, and that, perhaps, some day it may be moved and set up in some new centre where it is thought desirable to "introduce academic culture."* Then King's Chapel, though I do not care much for it myself. It is very good of its kind; but the kind—latest perpendicular—does not suit my taste. Compare it with the Sainte Chapelle, or with Magdalen or New College Chapels at Oxford, and you will be forced to confess that mediæval architecture, like other things, began to decay when it had reached its prime. Anyhow, with the rich glass of its windows, and its marvellous roof (go between the roofs and notice the double vaulting which, we are told, was the admiration of Sir Christopher Wren), it is far superior to that heavy and pretentious new Saint John's Chapel, which I like less every time I see it, and which all agree is not one of Scott's most successful works.

* I am glad such an authority as Professor Willis thought Clare well-nigh perfect, and yet its chief court was rebuilt in the dark age of architecture—about 1726.

The Cambridge Colleges are at once older and more modern than those of Oxford. To some of the latter the crumbling oolite gives an undeserved air of antiquity, making even debased Jacobean work look mediæval. Here and there a Cambridge College looks more modern than it is, thanks to the brick.

The gateway of Trinity, for instance, is almost the counterpart of the Chancery Lane gate of Lincoln's Inn; and we forget, for the moment, that both are of Henry the Eighth's time. Each University has one very fine College Chapel—Jesus, at Cambridge; the church of the nunnery suppressed and turned into a College in Henry the Seventh's time. It is early English, and at last (after having been vandalised a century ago, and all its rich stall work sold off to Landbeach Church) it has been really well restored.

At Oxford the fine chapel—not counting the Cathedral, which is also Christ Church Chapel, and is a curious mixture of Norman and Henry the Eighth perpendicular—is Merton, with its splendid decorated windows. In each University, moreover, there is far too much of that "carpenter's" and "stonemason's" Gothic which disgraced the revival of church architecture. There is little to choose in this respect between Wilkins's work at King's—so mean beside the earlier Palladian work of Gibbs—and All Souls', which, till Keble Chapel was built, was the only really ugly building in Oxford.

Cambridge has more of this kind of work—which always looks to me like thin board plastered over, wanting altogether the depth and solidity of the old mouldings—Corpus, for instance, and even Rickman's buildings at Saint John's, which prove that he was better as a writer on architecture than as an architect; but then Cambridge has "the Backs," an almost continuous walk along the left bank of the Cam, from which you see the river fronts of many of the Colleges, and, on summer evenings, watch the gay procession of racing and pleasure boats which make you forget that study, and not athletics and music and flirtation, is the object of the residents.

I suppose, on a fine evening, "the Backs" are better than Christ Church Meadow and Magdalen Walk combined; though each of these has its own charm, while the remains of the old Oxford city wall in John's and Trinity Gardens give a flavour to the place which is wanting in the sister town.

Both are damp; but Oxford, rising sharply from the river, much the less so; and, as I said, Oxford is much more of a town. Cambridge has nothing like the High Street. There is nothing like it in England, save the High Street of Stamford in Lincolnshire, on which the "great Secession" imprinted an indelibly academic type.

Oxford, too, is the older—not so much older as they say—for the tale about Alfred founding University College is as mythical as that of the "Schools of the Druids," or as "the Spanish King, hight Cantaber," who is said to have founded Cambridge.

The origin of the Universities, like that of many other institutions, is very obscure. Like Topsey, "they grewed." Learning had, during the darkness that followed the fifth and sixth century invasions of barbarians, been kept alive in Benedictine monasteries—of which Monte Cassino is the type—in schools of secular canons,* as at Arles, in Southern Burgundy; in Cathedral schools, of which York, under Theodore, and Bede, and Alcuin, was one of the most famous. By-and-by the Palace School of Charlemagne—formed mainly by Alcuin—gave a worldly turn to learning; and this was helped by intercourse with the Saracens.

To the Church, these "Paynim," that is, Pagans, were anathema; yet they were the best physicians of their time, and they had translated Aristotle, that great storehouse of learning, from which, by their ignorance of Greek—only a few learned men in Ireland retained any knowledge of it—Western scholars were wholly cut off.

Worldly learning had, for some time, been "in the air," and it first took solid form at Salerno, which, in the ninth century, became a "studium generale," such being the name for what we call University—the word University properly meaning simply a corporation. Salerno was chiefly medical; Bologna, the next in order, was legal. North Italy had got rich, and law disputes were constantly cropping up amongst its traders. Hence the need for teaching that civil—as opposed to canon—law, which Theodosius and Justinian had codified.

Barbarossa, coming into Italy in 1155, saw that this Bologna law school might be useful in the struggle between Pope and

* That is, canons not living under a monastic rule—these were "regulars"—but just like ordinary priests; there were many foundations of this kind in Saxon England, for example, Harold's at Waltham.

Emperor, and took it under his protection. But, before this, William of Champeaux and his pupil, Abelard, had opened a school in Paris; and John of Salisbury, full of the Paris methods, had returned to Oxford to organise on a broader basis, that Benedictine teaching which the canons of Saint Frideswide's had always kept alive.

If Matthew Paris is to be believed, there were in Oxford, in 1209, three thousand teachers and scholars; and to a great "town and gown row," which broke out soon after, and led to the place being wholly deserted by the students, is due the origin of Cambridge University. The place had been a Roman station (the "chester" in Granchester, a village close by, is, as usual, the Roman "castrum"). The Granta is a tributary of the Cam; but the Roman town was called Camboritum, though Grantabridge is the name in the Saxon Chronicle and in Domesday. Its four hundred houses were all on the left bank, where the ground rises, and where there is no College but Magdalen. The nucleus of the present town was a village grouped round the Saxon Church of Saint Benet's. How it came to pass that the wanderers from Oxford fixed on Cambridge, instead of Ely, it is hard to say. Some of them went to Northampton, which for a time bade fair to be a University town; but Cambridge had the fenland, then very rich, especially in fruit trees, and it was near, but not too near the bishopric. Moreover, the great Priory of Barnewell, founded in 1112, seems to have been from the first educational, and probably offered hospitality. Not long after, a great "town and gown" row in Paris (1229) drove many students to Cambridge as well as to Oxford; and by that time both Universities had got thoroughly established. Colleges were founded by-and-by. At first the scholars boarded where they could among the townspeople, forming themselves into "nations" (the name is still kept up in the Scotch Universities) for mutual protection. The next step was that Masters of Arts, or other responsible persons, opened hostels, in which the students were sometimes attacked and plundered by the townspeople; and lastly Colleges began to be founded, in Paris by provincial nobles, to shelter the scholars out of their own provinces, in England chiefly to promote the education of the parochial clergy ("secular" priests) which was suffering under the flood of monasticism brought in by the Norman Conquest. This

was the case with Merton, the earliest Oxford College, and with Peterhouse, founded at Cambridge in 1284 by Hugh Balsham, Bishop of Ely, out of the revenues of a suppressed foreign Priory.

Here was taught the "trivium"—to wit, grammar, logic, and rhetoric—a course of which lasted three years, and was followed by the "quadrivium," or four years' course of arithmetic, geometry, including geography—as taught by Pliny—music, and astronomy. The end of the "trivium" left the student a bachelor, or "determiner"—because he had to preside at disquisitions and determine the logical value of the opposing arguments. After the "quadrivium," he got a license from his teacher—instead of, as now, from the Vice-Chancellor—admitting him to the degree of M.A., and enjoining him to act for two years as a "regent," or teacher in the schools. It took him ten years' more work, attending lectures, and lecturing himself, to be ripe for a D.D. degree—now a matter of purchase—eight years for a D.C.L., and as many for a Doctor of Medicine; so that however "arid and unprofitable," according to modern notions, the studies may have been, students were by no means allowed to shirk them.

Three of the older Cambridge Colleges were due to the Black Death—Trinity Hall, Corpus Christi, and Clare. Of these, Corpus was founded by two Cambridge guilds, who took care to secure free masses for ever for the souls of their members, the great mortality among the clergy having raised the fees for all religious ministrations.

Such Colleges were sure to narrow the character of the University; and their statutes are in marked contrast with the thirteenth century statutes of Paris, whereby both civil and canon law were shut out from the course as being too technical. At Paris it was held that "liberal studies" alone befitted a University; at Cambridge the aim was proficiency in what would pay best. King's College, founded along with Eton by Henry the Sixth, was endowed out of alien Priors; no sooner was it founded, however, than both the Provost and the Commissioners appointed to draw up the statutes resigned. They did not like Henry's plan for making his College independent of the University, and, indeed, of everybody except King and Pope. Henry carried his point; and until a few years ago King's College men never went into the University examinations, nor took any

part in its government. They got their degrees by special license from the King, on whom alone—the Pope having passed out of English life—they had come to depend.

Margaret of Anjou showed in most things more energy than her husband; and she determined not to be behind him in helpfulness to education. The outcome of her "restless but holy emulation" (as Fuller calls it) was the founding of "Queens' College of Saint Margaret and Saint Bernard." It got its charter in 1448, the year of the foundation of King's; but the Wars of the Roses began, and Margaret had other work to do, and the college owed its full establishment to Elizabeth Woodville, once one of Margaret's ladies-in-waiting, who, with rare fidelity, carried out her late mistress' plans. Queens'—so named to show that two Queens had a share in it—rose suddenly into fame, when in 1510, Erasmus lived there (his rooms are still shown) and brought with him the "new learning," that is, the study of Greek and classical literature in general. The coming in of this new learning, which involved a change in architecture, in painting, in social life, as well as in letters, is called the Renaissance.

In Italy things had long been moving towards it; the taking of Constantinople in 1453, gave the final impulse. Scores of learned Greeks, carrying the manuscripts which they had saved from the sack of the city, landed in Italy, and began to teach what Italian scholars were longing to learn. A new world of thought was thus opened; and from Italy the movement spread to France, and thence to England. Soon Oxford had Linacre, Grocyn, Colet, Thomas More, and others—men of real culture, eager (as Colet proved himself when he became Dean of Saint Paul's) in the cause of education.

Cambridge held back; it had become little more than a place for training priests, and for turning out canonists and civilians (professors of civil law). Erasmus was snubbed by the dons, and mobbed by the townsmen, who had the English contempt for a foreigner. But for Bishop Fisher he would have gone away; as it was he shut up his lecture-room, to which nobody came, and took to writing the books which paved the way for the Reformation.

Nevertheless, the "new learning" made way; at Christ's College, just founded, provision was made for lecturing on the orators and poets, instead of exclusively on

Aristotle and the schoolmen. The pity of it is that this "new learning" did not make men noble-minded. It almost seemed to do the reverse. Machiavelism, with all that the word implies, came in along with it, and was by no means confined to Italy. The Tudor statesmen, trained in this "new learning," are, perhaps, the most cynically unconscientious set of men in English history.

Croke, Erasmus's pet pupil, showed himself as apt a pupil in servility as in Greek. When Henry the Eighth was getting impatient about his divorce, Cranmer—also one of the new lights, at that time Anne Boleyn's tutor—said: "Why not refer the question to all the Universities?" And Croke went abroad ostensibly to gather the opinions of famous canonists, but really to bribe them into deciding in the King's favour. It is to the honour of Cambridge that, though pressure of all kinds was put upon it, the first vote was in Catherine's favour; it was only by persuading some of their opponents to stay away, that the King's men—who were also advocates of the new learning—carried their point, and then with a point reserved which seemed to say that the Queen was in the right after all.

Naturally, the new learning led on to the Reformation. Cambridge, in 1522, set up a printing-press, and thence issued the first Greek books printed in England. As early as 1517, Peter de Valence, a young Norman student, read over the door of the Schools Pope Leo's Bull about indulgences—that which Luther burned at Wittenberg, and wrote above it: "How can money buy a man off from deserved punishment?" He was excommunicated—would have been burned had he not fled—but before long a band of scholars, with Tyndal among them, began to meet at the White Horse Inn, and to discuss what to some of them became, without any figure, burning questions. They were in earnest, which the courtiers were not. These thought only of seizing the Church's lands, and so rapacious were they, that the people soon began to regret the reign of King Log; and Thomas Lever—now little known, but in his day almost as famous as Latimer—confessed, when preaching at Paul's Cross, that "One courtier was worse than fifty tumbled monks."

Learning fell into decay; Colleges had a hard fight for their endowments. In the reign of that Edward the Sixth, whom our fathers were taught to look upon as a young

angel in trunk hose, but who really was nothing but a sickly prig, the "Act for the Dissolution of Colleges" was very nearly carried into effect against the Universities. Henry the Eighth had seen that he would lose much and gain little by dissolving the Oxford and Cambridge Colleges. At Hampton Court the question was discussed before him: on one side the courtiers—"ravening wolves," Parker, the Vice-Chancellor (afterwards Archbishop), calls them; on the other a few Heads of Houses.

After hearing both sides, Henry said: "I thought not I had in my realm so many persons so honestly maintained in living by so little land and rent." As long as he lived they were safe; but Protector Somerset's net had smaller meshes than his, and but for Sir John Cheke, Edward's tutor, the Universities would undoubtedly have suffered. Elsewhere Colleges were gradually dissolved all over the country. They were very numerous; wherever you find an unusually long chancel in a parish church, it was probably "collegiate," and, where a college was "secular," that is, non-monastic—a clergy-house where a few priests and deacons lived together and studied—it survived Henry's Dissolution. But before Edward died, very few of them were left, the result being that the clergy soon became illiterate. Scarcely one in a hundred understood Latin, or (says Lever) was able to preach. The few who went up to the University went to make friends with a view to promotion by-and-by in the public service. Had not Cecil, Lord Burleigh, got on that way, and Bacon, and many more? They thought the white wand of Lord Chamberlain was wrapped in every scholar's gown; and the Church was not a promising profession when even Queen Elizabeth forced Bishops and Deans to exchange good manors for bad ones whenever the fancy seized her. One wonders much that her favourite (so far as she could favour a married prelate) Parker did not put in a word for little Colleges, like Stoke by Clare, of which he had been Dean. At Clare, the quaint little Suffolk town whose name was in Elizabeth's reign transferred to the then newly-formed Irish county, was a famous Austin friary; at Stoke, close by, a century earlier, Richard de Clare had founded a Benedictine cell, attached to the famous Abbey of Bec. To avoid the suppression, which in the fourteenth century befel most alien monasteries, this was made denizen, that is, severed from the foreign connection, and in 1415

Mortimer, Earl of March, changed it into a College for "seculars," such as I have described above. In this way it did good work, much as a Theological College does nowadays—much better than the property has done since; for after various changes, it fell to the family of Elwes, whose chief contribution to society has been to present it with the two most famous of English misers.

All through Elizabeth's reign the state of Cambridge was pitiable. Cartwright, embittered by his exile, for some time gave the tone to the place. There were surplice and no-surplice rows, and, in the scuffle, the windows of the College chapels were broken out—those of King's had been happily removed whole and buried. Worst of all was the way Dr. Caius was treated. He was a Catholic, but a very liberal-minded one; and had given all his wealth to refound Gonville College, which had fallen into poverty, and which thenceforth was called "Gonville and Caius," the former part being usually omitted. It was rumoured that Caius had in his rooms—he lived in his own College—a set of vestments, mass books, and church ornaments such as had lately been seized in the rooms of Dr. Baker, Provost of King's. So the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors broke open his doors, and publicly burnt all his furniture in the court of his own College. Caius went off to London, heartbroken at such ungrateful treatment.

In contrast with his wide-mindedness—he never dreamed of giving a sectarian tinge to his College—was the narrowness of Sir Walter Mildmay, who took care that Emmanuel, founded by him in 1584, should be intensely Puritan. Several of the New England Fathers, among them the founder of Harvard, were educated there; and Sidney, founded ten years after by Sir Philip Sidney's aunt, was just as narrow, though it opened its fellowships to Scotch and Irishmen, both rigorously excluded from preferment in all other Colleges.

One thing saved Cambridge from absolute poverty—Sir T. Smith's Act, obliging the lessees of College lands to pay at least a third of the rent in corn or in malt, the corn to be always reckoned at six shillings and eightpence a quarter, the barley at five shillings. He foresaw that corn would greatly rise in value, and that, therefore, the Colleges, securing a quarter of wheat for every six shillings and eightpence of rent due to them, would gain greatly.

Another danger, more threatening than

the greed of Protector Somerset and his clique, befel the University during the Civil War. It was not besieged like Oxford; but the Castle was fortified by Cromwell, and the whole place so harried that few students came, and the Assembly of Divines petitioned for a College in London, which was actually opened by Sir Balthazer Gerbier, in Whitefriars. Cromwell, too, founded Durham, though the foundation remained for two centuries in abeyance. Indeed, he seems to have anticipated the present University extension movement, his idea being to have teaching centres in the great towns of North and West, that students might not be drawn such long distances from home.

The Barebones Parliament outwent Cromwell, and voted for the total suppression of the Universities; and, just before Monk marched on London, a plan was afoot for cutting down the Colleges to three in each University—for divinity, and law, and physic, and for forcing all students to go in cloaks, after the Dutch fashion.

With Charles the Second came back surplices and jobbery; only, instead of stealing manors, the Court now began to thrust its favourites into College dignities, which, thanks to Smith's Corn Rent Act, had become worth having. The tradition of learning and culture was kept alive solely by the Cambridge Platonists, Henry More, Cudworth, Whichcote, and others. "Latitude men" they were called, who taught that God had given us two lights—that of reason as well as of scripture. But they were few; the mass of "dons" was content to be orthodox and servile. Witness the way in which, when Monmouth was made Chancellor (1674),

With loud applause they all received his Grace,
And begged a copy of his godlike face;

but after his rebellion his picture was burned by the yeoman bedell, and his name struck out from all the lists of University officers. In 1710 Uffenbach visited Cambridge, and reported that at Caius the manuscripts were thick with dust in a miserable garret under the roof; at Magdalen the books were all mouldy; at Emmanuel they were in entire confusion; at the University library a rare codex of Josephus was torn at the end, and the librarian obligingly presented him with a leaf! At the same time the feeding arrangements were the reverse of comfortable. "The large hall of Trinity," says he, "is so ugly and smoky, and smells so strongly of bread and meat that I could not

eat a morsel in it." Things could not have been very appetising when a strong-stomached German made such a complaint. Yet, before this, Newton had published his "Principia," and a mathematical tone had been given to the studies of the place. Mathematical and little else it was till within the last few years, despite other changes—that in 1769 for instance, when the mediæval square cap was substituted for the round silk-lined caps which had come in with the Puritans; and that in 1740, when Mr. Tripos, the "old bachelor sitting on a three-legged stool," who had yearly travestied the Catholic Ash Wednesday disputations, was abolished, and his name transferred to the then instituted examination lists. With this change to modernism, Cambridge may be said to have well outgrown its beginnings.

THE JUSTICE OF THE GODS.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

"I WISH you weren't going away, Ada," said Captain Walton. "Why on earth should you go to Irkham for Christmas, instead of spending it in London?"

He was engaged to Ada Bennett, and was a masterful lover; passionate—indeed almost too passionate for the shy-eyed, timid girl at his side—but masterful and accustomed to have his own way with men and women. Yet, in spite of his strength of will, little Ada might have had the firmness to withstand his wishes and decline his love, if it had not been backed up by the aunt who so often assured her she had "been more than a mother to her"—yes, far more!—and by her sister Helen.

Helen Bennett—no one ever thought of calling her Nellie—was what is generally termed a "nice, sensible sort of girl;" the sort of girl who does not let romance, or caprice, or thin-skinnedness of any sort interfere with her advancement in life. When the Bennetts' father died and left them as nearly penniless as twenty pounds a year each could make them, no foolish pride, no dreams of independence, made Helen refuse the home which her aunt, Mrs. Penrhyn, offered them. Helen and Mrs. Penrhyn came to terms at once, without even expressing the terms in so many words. The girls were to make themselves agreeable—that is, dust the

drawing-room, arrange flowers, entertain dull visitors, make up for any deficiencies of ill-trained servants, and look always smiling, grateful, and well-dressed on twenty pounds a year.

"And some day, if all goes well," added Mrs. Penrhyn, "I'll see you in good homes of your own, I hope."

This was meant as an announcement that the girls were to accept the first eligible men who sought them. Helen saw this, and did her duty nobly. Irkham—black, smoky Irkham, where the jangle of machinery was heard continually, and the air was thick with smoke and cotton-flue—might not be her ideal of a city; nor was John Baggallay—rich in factories and vested funds, but not overburdened with either aspirates or aspirations—her ideal of a husband. But she accepted both, and was as happy as a woman of her nature needs to be.

Ada, though far the milder of the two, proved the more rebellious. Perhaps it was the fault of Laurie Penrhyn—her cousin Laurie, who fell in love with her without consulting the wishes of either his mother or his cousin Helen. He seemed to think that consulting Ada's was enough. Herein he erred; for though last Christmas, just a year ago, when he was home from Glasgow on a brief holiday, he had asked Ada if she loved him, and she had whispered "yes," that did not secure her for his wife. When he had gone, Helen treated Ada to much common-sense, to which Mrs. Penrhyn added a little uncommon coldness; and, finally, Helen herself wrote the letter which released him from "a hasty and ill-considered engagement; the impulse of youth and thoughtlessness," as she put it, being herself five years younger than Laurie Penrhyn, though certainly more given than he to taking thought for the morrow and the days succeeding.

"You little goose!" she said to her sister. "Laurie has only two hundred a year, and, if you get engaged to him, Auntie will turn you out of doors. She means her handsome son to catch an heiress. And there's Captain Walton evidently attracted by you. I wish I had such a chance!"

For Helen had accepted her Baggallay by this time, and though prepared to swallow him, could not refrain from a wry face or two.

"Laurie is getting on very well," protested Ada.

"Perhaps he is; but Captain Walton has got on, which is much more to the

point. What on earth do you want, Ada? He is a gentleman; he has that look which a man who has once been in the army never loses; and if it is true, as people say, that he made his money in India by dabbling in opium—why he's made his money, and that's the chief point. I don't see what fault you can find with him."

"He's too old."

"Old! Forty-five or so; that isn't old. You're a romantic little donkey, Ada; but if you refuse George Walton I'll never forgive you."

Ada did not risk angering her sister. Captain Walton proposed in July, and was duly accepted, which made Laurie Penrhyn exclaim, when in the beginning of December he was offered a good post in an American ship-building yard, that a fellow never got anything he wanted till it was too late to profit him.

Captain Walton did not think so. He seemed to think that Ada Bennett's love, or at least her promise to be his wife, would profit him very much, though he was impatient, and thought it hard that he must wait till spring before he was allowed to claim his bride.

"I shall be a new man when I have you with me, darling," he said, with that fervour of passion which frightened Ada more than it pleased her. "You are everything to me—strength, purity, happiness. I believe in Heaven, when I look in your eyes, even if I never do at any other time."

Poor Ada might be forgiven for thinking such wooing slightly blasphemous, and very much too fervent to be comfortable.

At present, Captain Walton felt deeply aggrieved that his betrothed was determined, in that mild, obstinate way of hers, to spend Christmas at Irkham, with her sister Helen, now Mrs. Baggallay.

"It would seem strange not to go to Helen the first Christmas after her marriage," she said, "and besides, Laurie is coming home, so I'm better away."

"What has that to do with it?" cried the irritable lover.

Ada looked nervous, and equivocated:

"He is going abroad almost immediately, and he and his mother won't want any third person with them during his last few days at home."

"H'm! Well, I wish you weren't going to Irkham, that's all. It's a beastly hole."

"Do you know it at all, George?" asked the girl, bringing out her lover's name with an effort, as she always did.

Captain Walton looked as if he did not like the question.

"I was there once, fifteen years ago, and I had enough of it then."

"Fifteen years ago! Ah, that was just when you came home from India, wasn't it? Well, it may have improved since then. And Helen says her house is charming—an old house with a large garden, once in the country, which the town has come up and surrounded. It's not the sort of house the Irkhamites like, she tells me. They prefer brand new plaster and stucco, and can't understand her being so fond of Gore House."

"Gore House! It's an ugly name."

"Yes, isn't it? I must ask Helen if any one was ever killed there. Or I'll let you ask her; for you're coming up for Christmas Day, aren't you? Really, you needn't grumble so at my going."

"I wouldn't, if you weren't going a fortnight before me. However, I must submit for the present. But, after the first week in March, your days of liberty are numbered, my pet."

"Then I must make the most of those left me," she said, with a nervous little smile. "So I'll go off to Irkham, and be free of your chains till the day before Christmas Eve."

"Well, see that you write to me often and tell me everything. Nothing that you do, nothing that you see or feel, is too trivial to interest me. Remember that, Ada; remember that you are all the world to me; that a new life will begin for me when you are my wife."

Ada sighed, thinking, not gladly, of the new life that would then begin for her; but she was thankful to be released by her imperious lover at the price of a kiss or two, and still more thankful next day to leave smoky London for smokier Irkham.

Her first letter to her lover was bright and cheerful enough, full of the details he said he cared for—a description of Helen's house in general, of the little sitting-room set apart for herself in particular, its chairs, its books, the china plates hung on the walls, the dainty ink-stand, even the Shakespeare calendar on the writing-table at which she penned the letter. There were enough of the trivialities he had asked for, and not much besides—not enough affection to justify the passionate way in which he kissed the cold, crisp, lifeless paper, nor the fervour with which he exclaimed under his breath: "Unworthy as I am, I'll make her a kinder husband

than, perhaps, a better man would. She'll never know what I have been, and for her sake I'll live as purely as such innocence deserves."

Poor George Walton! He had, it seemed, something in his past life that he wished to conceal from Ada, and he never guessed that down in that quiet, simple heart of hers also there lay a little secret, sad, however innocent. He sighed, and then recalled with a bitter look that it was the day on which he ought to send a certain quarterly remittance, which, though meanness was not one of his faults, was never despatched without a curse.

Ada's next letter was less cheerful. "You will think me awfully stupid," she said in it, "but I have got quite depressed since I came here. Perhaps it is the climate, which certainly is horrid; nothing but rain—smoky, dirty, towny rain. But I have quite a horrid impression about this house; I think it was the trees at the foot of the lawn that gave it to me first. There are three of them growing all together—quite large trees for a town garden, but there is a horrid red fungus growing on them that made me feel quite faint the first time I saw it. I think it was there I got the dreadful feeling I am telling you of—I can't define it a bit yet, but I am always conscious of it—and it followed me up the garden, into the drawing-room—which has long windows opening on a verandah, I think I told you—and even up to my little boudoir, where I am writing about it to you. For I can't get rid of it; that's the silly thing. At night I wake up in a sort of horror; not that I have seen anything, or dreamed anything, but I feel as if I were going to hear of something horrid, and though it is so idiotic and unreasonable I can't get over the impression. I haven't told Helen or John about it. I suppose it must be the climate."

"Of course it's the climate," said Walton, as he read the letter. "The damp, mild, enervating, soul-and-body-destroying Irkham climate that's making her morbid. I remember it well enough, and how it seemed to—ugh! it's not worth thinking of. But I won't let Ada go there again. Happily, she won't want to, thanks to this notion."

He wrote a jesting protest to her, saying that her ghost story came like the other Christmas annuals, too long before Christmas, and after all hadn't even a

ghost in it. "Never mind, little girl," he added, "I'll be with you soon, and be something so real to think of that the cobweb 'feelings' and 'impressions' you speak of will vanish from your brain. But don't say anything to your sister or her husband that will put them out of love with their house, when they have just got comfortably settled in it, after spending so much on making it pretty. Besides—though theosophy is in fashion now, and all the clever young fellows, who would have been rank materialists ten years ago, are seeing visions and dreaming dreams, and generally over-stepping the bounds that separate matter and spirit—I don't want you, my darling, to be anything but a most human, loveable little wife."

Ada obediently tried to repress her fancies, and to enjoy life as it was lived in Irkham; but she could not succeed. She grew more depressed and nervous every day. Perhaps it was indeed the climate that weakened her; perhaps she felt a certain loneliness even with Helen, who had now plenty of friends among young matrons of her own stamp—healthy, happy, animal-like creatures for the most part, who liked their husbands much, and their houses more, and their smart clothes most of all. Ada felt lonely among them, in spite of their treating her with a spontaneous friendliness which was their best characteristic, and her loneliness deepened the strange, morbid impression she had taken up concerning Gore House. When she wrote first to her lover on the subject, the idea had been vague and undefined; but, as the days went on, it gathered clearness and coherence.

"I am ashamed," she wrote now, "to speak to you again of the silly notion I have got into my head about this house; but I promised to tell you everything, and somehow this fancy seems far more real to me than any of the solid tangible things round me. I know almost the whole story now—and I haven't seen anything or heard anything, nor have I mentioned the matter to a soul except you; but yet—I know. There was a murder committed here once—let me speak of the thing as if it had really happened. A child, just fancy, George, a poor, innocent little child—was taken out of the room that is now my boudoir, and carried downstairs into the drawing-room and killed, and then buried under the trees on the lawn. Is it not horrible? At least, it would be horrible if it had ever happened, and wasn't only a

dream of my imagination. I am ashamed to tell you such nonsense, and yet I must speak of it to somebody, for the consciousness of it weighs me down, as if I were somehow connected with the guilty secret."

"Good heavens! is she going mad!" Walton asked himself, when he read these sentences. "I know she is absurdly sensitive to the vaguest impressions, and the society of that unimaginative, worldly sister of hers will be driving her more and more in upon herself. And Irkham, in December, is enough in itself to make anybody think of murder and suicide. I must go to her as soon as I can, and I'll bring her away with me the day after Christmas, and if I can help it she'll never enter the place again. Helen can come to London if she wants to see her."

He was seriously alarmed, thinking of the possible effect on Ada's health and mind of this strange, morbid fancy of hers. For he loved her with a passion she could hardly have understood, and felt as if the one ray of light that brightened his path would be quenched if anything prevented her becoming his wife. So he got a timetable, and, having studied it, took the first train to Irkham, determined to see Ada at once, and cure her of her gloomy notions by his presence and the power of his love.

CHAPTER II.

THERE was trouble in the Baggallay household. The parlour-maid, with that lack of consideration for her mistress's convenience which Helen looked upon as characteristic of the servant class, sprained her ankle a few days before Christmas. Another equally competent domestic was not to be got at a moment's notice, and Mrs. Baggallay had issued invitations for a dinner-party on Christmas Eve, when she proposed to introduce her sister's betrothed to her especial friends. Helen was in despair; she felt that fate was using her unkindly, and in her depression was glad to listen to a suggestion of the girl's, who in her turn did not wish to lose a comfortable situation. She had a widowed sister, a Mrs. Wallwork—evidently, from the way she spoke of her, the member of her family who had "got on"—who might if she was asked courteously enough, condescend to take her place till she was able to fill it again.

"You know, ma'am, my sister isn't quite

like one of us. She's a good bit older than me, and has always held her head high," explained the girl. "She was always well thought on in her places, and one of her families left her an annuity, so of course she has a right to think something of herself. But I've no doubt she'll come for a day or two to oblige me if only you don't mind putting it to her as a bit of a favour."

Helen did not mind putting it as a condescension on the part of Mrs. Wallwork, if only she would come, and she had already learned that in the north country the working classes look upon themselves as the salt of the earth, and demand a recognition of the fact from their masters and mistresses. She sent a beseeching note to Mrs. Wallwork, setting forth her desperate plight, and that lady was gracious enough to come and interview her, and to consent to grace Gore House with her presence on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

"If you're having company and extra work, of course you'll need a parlour-maid," she said; "but in your ordinary run, you can get along if the 'ousemaid will only put herself to it."

With this concession, Helen was forced to be content; but in order that Mrs. Wallwork might be as far as possible fit for her duties when she came to undertake them, she took her over the house, and explained to her what would be expected of her.

Gore House was on the outside a very ordinary building, a square house with a portico over the door supported on stucco pillars—such a residence as may be seen by the score in any town. Formerly it had been surrounded by others like itself; but as the tide of Irkham fashion went elsewhere they had been pulled down, and endless rows of small houses, occupied by the poorer of the clerk and the richer of the artisan classes, had taken their place. Those who knew the district said that the changes of the last ten years had made it almost unrecognisable, and most of Helen Baggallay's friends predicted that she would soon leave her old-fashioned house, in spite of its spacious rooms and large garden, and go to some smaller, smarter villa where she would be surrounded by "people like herself." Helen did not think so. She knew that there was a good deal of social sensitiveness in Irkham, caused by the fact that so many of the millionaires had cousins who were still in their original station of factory hands, with whom, therefore, they

did not care to risk coming in contact; and such anxieties could not befall her. Besides, she liked her roomy house, which was so much larger than it seemed from the street, stretching out on the garden side in a long wing which contained a billiard-room, dining-room, and drawing-room, all opening on a verandah that went round two sides of the house, and gave easy access to the sloping lawn.

She was still new enough to her position to feel a thrill of pride as she led her future parlour-maid through the rooms. Finally she opened the door of the drawing-room, where the sound of a piano, languidly touched, proved that Ada was trying to get rid of the time that now hung heavy on her hands.

"I shall expect you to——" she began, when the woman by her side uttered a sharp exclamation, ran forward a few steps into the room, and then fell fainting on the floor.

Helen and Ada rushed to her help, but it was some time before she revived. Even when she was restored to consciousness she hardly seemed to recognise them, but looked wildly round the room. "It's the same room," she muttered. "Everything's changed, the paper, and the furniture, and everything; but I can't mistake the room. I didn't recognise the house, and it hasn't the same name, but there's no doubt about the room."

"Well, what about the room?" queried Helen, with a touch of sharpness. She did not like mysteries.

"I saw a dead child in it," the woman moaned. "The child I had nursed since it was a month old, and I was fond of it—oh! if it had been my own, I couldn't have loved it more!—lying in this room on a sofa, dead! That was the last time I was here, and I never thought to enter the place again."

"It's very sad, of course," said Mrs. Baggallay, feeling very much annoyed at the scene; "but the child wasn't your own after all, and I suppose all this occurred some time ago——"

"Fifteen years," interrupted Mrs. Wallwork; "but you don't understand it, ma'am. The child—the poor little baby was killed—murdered by its own father!"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Helen; but Ada, who had been listening intently, caught hold of the woman's wrist with a convulsive clasp. "Then that was the child that was killed!" she cried, breathlessly.

"Yes, the child; but how do you know,

miss?" asked Mrs. Wallwork, and, "What do you know about it, Ada?" demanded Helen.

"Nothing. At least I have been told nothing; but I have felt ever since I entered this house that a crime had been committed in it, and latterly I have felt sure that a child was murdered here—taken from my little sitting-room upstairs, carried down here and killed, and then buried under those trees in the lawn. I never mentioned it to you, because it seemed such a fantastic idea, but I'm sure of it all the same."

"What nonsense!" protested her sister; and, turning to Mrs. Wallwork, added: "We must get you out of this room that affects you so much; and perhaps you had better say nothing about this—ah!—fancy or recollection of yours. One doesn't like such stories about a house; and, you know, if you didn't recognise the house, you may be mistaken in the room."

"No mistake at all, ma'am, but you're right about not speaking of the matter. I've never opened my lips about it this fifteen years, and I don't want ever to mention it again. But if you have any doubts about what I say, take me up to the room the young lady spoke of, and I'll see if it's the one I'm thinking of."

"It's quite useless," cried Helen.

But Ada said:

"Yes, let us go;" and there was a strained, fierce look on her face that made her sister think it wiser to consent to the suggestion.

She alone knew how self-willed Ada could be, and how obstinate in clinging to her fancies.

They went upstairs, Mrs. Wallwork leaning on Ada's arm, and Helen following them. For once the younger sister seemed the more decided of the two.

"Yes, this is the room," said the still trembling woman. "It was the night-nursery, and I slept here with the baby. One night, about midnight, I awoke, and the child wasn't in my arms, and—well, I've told you the rest."

"But I want to know everything," demanded Ada. "Who was this man—this father, who murdered his own child?"

"Ah! but I can't tell you. They called themselves Mr. and Mrs. Everett; but I don't think that was their right name. I took them to be a young, married couple. They had been in Irkham for some months before the baby was born. I came to them when it was a month old, and was here six months; I suppose they were in Irkham

for about a year. From some things they said, I guessed they had been in India; but they didn't get any foreign letters—at least, I thought not; all that came to the house had a London postmark. But once I found an envelope with an Indian stamp, and if it was addressed to my master, it wasn't in the name I knew him by."

"What name was it?"

"I don't remember now, it's so long ago, and I paid no heed at the time. It was only afterwards that I began to put things together."

"Did they know many people in Irkham?" asked Helen.

"Not a soul. I remember my mistress once saying to Mr. Everett that they were more solitary there than in the midst of a desert, and he answered that there was no place like big cities for concealment."

"And why—why did he do this dreadful thing?"

"Ah, miss, it's a sad world!" said the woman. "There's things the like of you don't understand. And perhaps Mr. Everett didn't kill his child. I didn't see him do it; only when I woke up and found the baby gone, I rushed out to the landing and saw a light downstairs. I followed that. It came from the open drawing-room door, and there was the poor child lying dead. I cried out, and then my master rushed in by the open window from the garden, and—silenced me."

"How?"

"He gagged me and carried me upstairs to the nursery. Then he tied me down to my bed with the sheets, and left me for a time. He came back at last, and said:

"'Unless you want a grave dug for yourself, too, you had better dress yourself quietly and come with me.'

"I was afraid of what he might do, so I obeyed him. When I was ready, and went out of the room, I found my mistress waiting on the landing, dressed to go out. She was trembling, and I think she was crying a little; but very quietly, only I could hear her sobbing occasionally. The three of us went downstairs. I tried to walk as heavily as I could, thinking I might rouse the other two servants; but they slept at the end of a long passage, in the back part of the house, and I was still gagged and could not cry. When we got out of doors, Mr. Everett said to his wife:

"'You know your way, do you not, and have money enough for the present? Go

straight away, and I'll follow you as soon as I have settled this creature.'

"My mistress went off by herself, and I thought my end had come; but he only kept me walking through the town till morning—oh, but I was tired!—and then took me to the railway station and put me in the train for Berstowe, the place I came from. He put some money into my hand and said I would get more if I held my tongue; and that was the last I ever saw of him, and I've never breathed a word about it till this day."

"But why did he do it? Why did he do it?" cried Ada.

"That's what I can't tell you for certain," said Mrs. Wallwork. "I have my notions. Well, I'll tell you, and you can make what you like out of it. One morning, not long before, I had taken the baby to her room. She had just had a cup of tea and a letter brought to her, and she was reading it when I went in. Before I got near her, she jumped up with a cry, and ran into her husband's dressing-room, and I heard her say:

"'Oh George, this is terrible! Alfred's coming home. He is so old, so old; why can't he die and leave me free?'

"Mr. Everett pulled to the door with a bang, and I heard nothing more; but I've wondered since—well, I may be wrong. There's no use talking about it."

"And did you do nothing to bring this man to justice?" asked Mrs. Baggallay.

"N—no. You know what it is when poor folks try to set the law agin rich ones; and, besides, I didn't know anything about where Mr. and Mrs. Everett had gone to. I came up to Irkham after a day or two, and went to the house; but it was empty, except that bailiffs were taking away the furniture. I didn't want to get into trouble, so I said nothing."

"Oh, it's horrible that such a crime should go unpunished!" exclaimed Ada, rising from her seat and walking towards the window. She felt maddened with the story she had just heard. She longed to avenge that murdered child, whose spirit, it now seemed to her excited imagination, had been trying to win her ear ever since she came to the house. She longed to search for this unnatural father, and bring him to justice; but how should she begin? She had been standing with her hand resting on the writing-table, and a sudden impatient movement she made in reflecting on her powerlessness, caused the calendar that lay on it to fall. Scooping mechani-

cally to pick it up, her eye fell on the motto given for that twenty-second of December: "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us."

"Is that enough?" she asked herself. "Does the vengeance of God really pursue and punish every wrong-doer? Can we leave it to Him?"

She did not answer her own questions, but she no longer felt bound to help on the punishment of the crime.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN WALTON found, when he arrived at Irkham, that Gore House was not easy to discover. The address, as he had received it from Ada, must have been incomplete, though the omniscience of the postman had ensured the safe conveyance of his letters. He could tell the cabman to whose care he entrusted himself what district of the town it was in, but for the rest he had to trust to that cabman's knowledge, which was found wanting, and the chapter of accidents. Happily this brought to their aid one of the said omniscient postmen, to whom the cabman appealed for guidance.

"Gore House! why, it's at the end of Gore Street," he was then contemptuously informed. "Turn off Cambridge Street at the end of Rushton Lane, and then take the first turn to the left."

The names struck with a painful familiarity on the ear of the traveller, but he mentally echoed his driver's exclamation:

"There! There's no Gore House off Rushton Lane that I knows of."

"They called it that after Gore Street was built," exclaimed the postman. "It's the house that used to be called Wrexham Lodge."

"I know where you are, now!" exclaimed the cabman driving on; but Walton covered his face with his hands.

"Wrexham Lodge!" he said to himself. "And Ada's in it—in that house, of all places in the world."

He forced himself to seem calm when he reached the house and got out. His arrival was unexpected, for he had come to Irkham a day sooner than he had intended, and the housemaid, who opened the door for him, did not know exactly what to do with him. So she left him in the hall while she went up to Ada's boudoir to consult her mistress.

"Show him into the drawing-room, of course," said Mrs. Baggallay. "Ada, you'd better go and receive Captain Walton yourself."

"If you like," said Ada, "but I can't bear to go into the drawing-room just yet; the idea of it is too dreadful. May I bring him up here? I don't feel any horror of this room, and, if you don't mind, we might sit here this evening."

"Just as you like, though it's rather small. Run off, and meantime I'll take Mrs. Wallwork down the back staircase."

Ada went off, but Helen detained Mrs. Wallwork for a final word:

"Seeing that this is such an old story, and that we can do nothing in the matter, perhaps it would be better to make no allusion to anything you—ah—fancied occurred in this house. There's no proof, you know, and—you understand."

"Oh yes, ma'am," answered the woman, eagerly. "I don't want to speak of it, only I was so took aback at seeing that room, that the whole story came out. But it's no business of mine, and—well—there's five pounds come to me every quarter since that time. I don't know who sends it, but it comes. So I'll keep quiet."

"I understand," said Helen, with a sense of relief; and she led her along the corridor towards the door that separated the servants' rooms and staircase from the other part of the house.

As they went along, Ada and her lover were coming upstairs. Mrs. Wallwork turned to look at the pair—was there ever a woman born who did not like to look at happy lovers!—but as she did so she again uttered an exclamation, and seemed about to faint. Helen caught her, and Ada and Captain Walton hurried to help her, but as the latter approached she pushed him away.

"Don't let him come near me!" she cried. "It's Mr. Everett, and he'll kill me for telling you the truth."

"You are mad, woman," cried Helen, though at the moment she spoke she remembered with a sinking heart that Walton's entire name was George Everett Walton.

As for him, he came close to the woman to relieve Helen of her weight, apparently without recognising her; but at her words he started back.

"Is it you, woman, you!" he exclaimed. "First the house, and then to find you in

it, spying on me as you did before. What does it mean!"

"Yes, what does it mean, Captain Walton?" echoed Helen, but in a different tone. "If you are the man this woman thinks you are, you are a murderer and a villain. Is it true?"

"No; it's a lie—a lie," he cried, excitedly. "She mistakes me for some one else; she's mad—she's—"

Ada stopped him.

"Tell lies to all the world, George," she said, in a cold, stern tone he had never heard before, "but speak the truth to me. I was to be your wife; I have a right to know. Did you live in this house fifteen years ago under the name of George Everett? Were you guilty of the sin, the crime, this woman accuses you of?"

"Ada," he answered, "all men are guilty of things they are ashamed of. Search any man's past—"

She held up her hand with a gesture that silenced him.

"It is enough," she said. "Go, before I am calm enough to decide whether or not I ought to seek your punishment."

He bent his head and turned to go; but to the girl, who a few minutes before had been his betrothed, he said a last word.

"Ada, I am punished; I have lost you."

Then he left the house, while the three women stood silent, mute with a horror that yet was mingled with awe.

The next day the *Irkham* newspapers contained an account of a suicide that had taken place the preceding evening. George Walton had gone to an hotel, taken a room, and there poisoned himself with a solution of morphia, which, it seemed, he always had about him. After this fashion he had prepared himself for the discovery that had come upon him at last.

Ada was very ill for a long time after that gloomy Christmas at *Irkham*. Helen thought at first that the horror of it would kill her, and found her only hope in the thought that her sister had never loved George Walton. That thought carried comfort to another anxious heart, to whom Ada's life was the most precious in the world. And in the end she did recover and find consolation, for the following autumn John Baggallay and Helen had to go to Liverpool to say good-bye to some friends of theirs who were going to America—Mr. and Mrs. Laurence Penrhyn.

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CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Conceit," etc.*

CHAPTER X. A FIRST MEETING.

AFTER that Sunday night Mr. Tresyllion seemed to be constantly at the house, and he and Mrs. Cray became great friends.

She always spoke of him as a boy; and, considering that she was thirty-four and he twenty-three, it was excusable, and seemed to account for her interest in him, and her growing predilection for his society. His manner to her was always the same—frank, cordial, admiring; but with nothing to express any greater warmth of interest than that of an affectionate younger brother.

They had a great deal in common—their pursuits, their tastes, their love of art, their Bohemian tendency and dislike to anything like conventionality.

I think the young fellow began to look upon the little house in Bruton Street as a sort of home—a place where he was always welcome, and never in the way. He liked the little suppers, all light, and wit, and sparkle; and the boxes at the theatre, where he almost always made the third or fourth to her parties; and the discussions of new books, and the meeting with new authors, who came perpetually to those Sunday gatherings.

But he did not see what I saw, how excited and feverish Mrs. Cray was becoming; how irritable in moods and temper; how discontented and cynical about life; how hard to please; how averse to the society of women younger, fairer, more calculated to excite admiration than herself.

She had sprung into wider popularity than ever, and had made such a large sum of money out of her last book that she was able to give herself a rest for a time—breathing-space, she called it.

The spring glided into summer, and the river-parties and picnics began; but she was in town much oftener than she had been the previous season, and seemed to go more into society; and sometimes she'd laugh and show me the papers where she was described as "the beautiful and talented authoress of 'So-and-So,'" and where they had put how she was dressed.

She had never cared about gowns before; but she did now, and I knew that Mr. Tresyllion often designed them for her, as far as colour and effect went; and lovely some of them were. And another thing I know Mr. Tresyllion had told her was about her light eyelashes, for she took to touching them up at night; and, as she did it very lightly and artistically, the effect was really very good, and gave her quite a different expression.

Once or twice I've heard Rex Tresyllion tell her she "looked lovely;" and I used to think it was rather a shame, though he may have meant no harm. But she'd sit and dream there, before the glass, for all the world like a young girl of seventeen; and I'm sure 'twas only over what he had said.

I dare say he was used to making those sort of speeches to women. They seemed to come too naturally and gracefully from his lips, to be deep-felt or sincere.

I wondered sometimes if Mr. Cray noticed any difference in his wife. He was a lazy, easy-tempered man, and a very good husband, and never interfered with her in any way. But I often thought that if I were a husband, I wouldn't like to

have a young, good-looking fellow like Rex Tresyllion quite so much with my wife.

One evening there was to be a rather large party at Bruton Street. An "omnium gatherum," Mrs. Cray called it. There was a grand supper, and the whole house turned upside down.

I was to attend to the tea and coffee, and I thought it would be great fun, as I should see every one, and all the dresses, and hear all their talk.

I think it must have been about ten o'clock when two ladies walked into the tea-room.

I started as I saw the smaller and slighter of the two come up to the table.

"Why, good gracious!" I cried out, forgetting manners and everything else. "If it isn't Miss Kate!"

"Jane!" she exclaimed; and then, grand lady as she was, it was just her old pretty, impulsive self, wringing my hands, and laughing, and chattering away. "Oh, my dear, dear old Jane!" she went on. "Where have you hidden yourself all this time? I have so often wondered what had become of you. Why, it's years and years, isn't it, since we saw each other? And I've got two boys now. You must come and see them, Jane; such jolly little chaps; always in mischief. Marcia, my dear," she went on, turning to her friend, who was looking on in surprise, "this is my old nurse, whom I've lost sight of for years. She's married, and I'm married. But oh, Jane," and she laughed again, "what fun we had once! Oh, the dear old days of 'make believe,' when we both kept diaries! Do you remember, Jane? And when we went to Paris. Dear me! what ages ago it seems! And what brings you into service again? The idea! Why, I thought you and Tom were flourishing and prosperous all this time!"

"I've had a deal of trouble, Miss Kate," I said, handing her the tea she had asked for; "but then, we all must have our share sooner or later. I've managed to get along very well, thank Heaven, and have never wanted for friends; and I like hard work, it keeps me from brooding too much over worries."

"You ought to have written to me, and to have told me," she said, reproachfully. "I'd have taken you willingly into my service."

"I didn't like to trouble you," I said. "But I'm so pleased to see you again. And oh, Miss Kate, how pretty you've grown!

No need, I'm sure, to ask if you're well and happy?"

"I look both, you think," she said, with an odd little smile just touching her soft red lips. She lifted her eyes as she spoke, and looked straight before her into the glass over the mantelpiece. She gave a little start, and half turned round. Following her glance, I saw Mr. Rex Tresyllion leaning carelessly against the door. I don't know how long he had been there; but doubtless he had heard some of the conversation, judging from the amused expression in his eyes.

He looked the very picture of lazy, careless content; and handsomer than ever, I thought, as he sauntered over to the table and asked for coffee, which I gave him.

Then a voice said:

"Have you forgotten me, Mr. Tresyllion?" and Miss Kate's friend came forward and held out her hand. He put down his cup.

"Mrs. Ellerton! Well, this is a surprise," he said, shaking hands warmly with her. "I thought you had eschewed the gaieties of London for ever."

"Oh, no!" she said. "I tried it for a time; but you see what slaves of the treadmill we are. However much we rail against it, we still like to do our day's work, and won't be excused."

"Is your husband with you?"

"Not to-night. I am chaperoning this young lady. Let me introduce you, by-the-bye. Kate, this is Mr. Rex Tresyllion, whom you know by repute, and whom I knew as a schoolboy—Rex, Mrs. Carruthers."

They bowed. There was one quick glance of mutual interest, an interchange of ordinary phrases, such as I had heard a dozen times before on that evening, and—that was all.

Ordinary enough, simple enough, innocent enough, but, oh, my dear, if I could have seen what that meeting was to bring about—if I could have looked forward, but a few years, into that future which had seemed so safe and happy a one for you until that night!

They all went upstairs to the drawing-room, and I saw no more of them till some two hours later, when Mr. Tresyllion brought her down for an ice. There was no one else in the room, and they sat down on a low cushioned lounge just behind the door. Miss Kate (I shall never be able to

call her anything else, so it's no use trying) at her ice, and he—looked at her.

I don't wonder at it. I don't see how any man could help it. She mightn't have been actually beautiful, but the changeful, brilliant little face; the great, deep, velvety eyes; the childish, pouting mouth; the grace of the dainty little figure, so softly draped and gowned in deep red, the colour of geranium blossoms, that made her dusky hair, and clear brown skin, and glowing eyes stand out in rich relief. Well, to my eyes, there was no one there that night worth looking at beside her, and a good many of the gentlemen seemed of my opinion. I thought she was an arrant little flirt; but there, it was just her way. Marriage hadn't changed her, nor motherhood either, and it's my belief that nothing could or would. She was bound to charm, and she really couldn't help herself, and she was so young, and so pretty.

It seemed ridiculous to think of her as being a married woman. I don't think Mr. Tresyllion did at all. His manner certainly never seemed to say so.

It was delightful to hear them talk; I can't remember half they said, but I never saw two people get on better on such short acquaintance. It reminded me of two streams—now touching, now parting, now running side by side, now quiet and earnest, the next moment rippling and dancing for sheer delight of movement and companionship. Of course, they talked about his book; and for the first time in my experience he spoke of it deprecatingly. Miss Kate took up the cudgels for her sex, and I certainly think she had the best of it. But she took such an innocent, high-souled view of womanhood, that no man could have had the heart to undeceive her.

Certainly Mr. Tresyllion had not, for I heard him say, as he gave her his arm to return to the drawing-room:

"Had I known you three years ago, 'Delilah' would never have been written."

I heard it, and I looked at the two young figures—the two beautiful, glowing, youthful faces, and, for one moment, a sort of regret seemed to touch my heart, and I thought what a pity Miss Kate had been in such a hurry to marry. For I knew there had been no question of love—no sentiment whatever about it; and if ever a day should come when she would know the force, and strength, and tempting of passion, what safeguard would memory have for her, or duty either?

The childish nature was but little altered. The spoilt, wilful, capricious little beauty of to-night was not so very far removed from that impulsive young charge of mine, who would box my ears one moment and cry with penitence the next.

And again, as I saw the soft, red skirts flutter up the dimly-lighted staircase, I sighed to myself: "Oh, Miss Kate! Miss Kate!"

Once again that night I heard and saw those two.

I was near the door of the supper-room. They were standing looking on.

"No room yet," said Mr. Tresyllion. "Let us wait. Come and sit down here."

I heard the ripple of Miss Kate's pretty laughter. "You seem to have an affection for dark corners and staircases," she said. "Is this the way you generally behave at parties? If so, your hostess must find you an extremely useful person."

"You ought not to blame me," he said, softly, "for you are both cause and excuse of my uselessness to-night. Come and sit down. I want to talk to you. I thought I should never get a chance. You've been so surrounded."

Now, I'm not, of course, aware of the way gentlemen talk to ladies at parties, but I certainly thought this was rather bold and rather strange, too, considering that Miss Kate was married.

But, perhaps, he never thought of that, and her husband wasn't there to remind him; and, as I said before, of all the audacious little flirts——

They came into the supper-room some half-hour later and found a small table unoccupied, and they seemed to enjoy themselves very much indeed, and laughed and jested and talked away for all the world like a couple of children. But I saw what they didn't, that Mrs. Cray's blue eyes were flashing dire wrath in their direction, and that an expression of acute anguish crossed her face for one unguarded moment, as she noted that fair head with its close, soft curls, bent down so near the pretty, flushed face, and sparkling eyes of her stranger guest. For Miss Kate had never met her till to-night, and had only come at her friend, Mrs. Ellerton's, invitation.

The two women were a great contrast to one another, and there was little doubt who had the best of it. Youth—beauty—wit—audacity; and yet withal the innocence and fearlessness of a nature the world had not sullied, and society had not

spoiled. That was how Mrs. Cray summed up her rival, for I saw it written down the next day on one of her fragments of paper headed "Notes for new Novel," and underneath was scrawled in a fierce, impulsive, almost illegible hand:

"I hate her! Fate tells me that she will bring evil into my life; but if she measures swords with me, let her beware. She has more to lose than I have, and she will feel the loss more deeply."

CHAPTER XL "CROSS, PAULINE?"

"JANE," said Mrs. Cray abruptly the next morning, as she was helping me put away the silver and glass, "how long is it since you left Mrs. Carruthers?"

"I left her when she married, ma'am," I answered. "I had been her nurse, and then her maid; but I married before she did, and when she left Dayrell Court for her new home, my husband wished me to leave service and go with him to London."

"Was she—was she very much attached to her husband?" asked my mistress, in a hesitating sort of way, turning a tiny Venetian flower-glass over and over in her hand as she spoke.

"I believe so," I answered. "He was a great deal older than herself; but such a good, kind-hearted man, devotedly fond of her."

"She is very pretty," said Mrs. Cray, putting the glass down abruptly. "A great flirt, I should think. It's to be hoped Mr. Carruthers is not a jealous man. Elderly husbands are, as a rule."

"Do you think, ma'am," I said, "there's any rule about it? Isn't it more a matter of temperament and disposition?"

"You are getting quite a student of character, Jane," she said, with a faint smile. "That comes of my Sunday suppers. I always say they're a 'liberal education.'"

She sat down abruptly, and leaned her head on her hands, her elbows on the table.

"I'm very tired," she said, with a sigh. "I wish I hadn't given that party. I wonder why we entertain people we don't care a straw about, and who certainly don't care a straw about us? It is so senseless! A waste of time, a waste of money, a waste of feeling, a trial to one's nerves and temper. Good Heavens, what a world of fools this is!"

I went on quietly washing the fragile glass, and did not answer. I saw that she was

put out, and I guessed the reason. I began to think of my French experiences, and to wonder if Englishmen were coming round to Antoine's opinion—"To be married; but that makes it that you are the more attractive."

Modern novels seemed to say so; modern plays also, with their breaches of the seventh commandment as the only pivot of an exciting plot.

"We have no friends nowadays—only acquaintances," Mrs. Cray went on presently, pushing the thick, fair hair off her brow with an impatient gesture. "I know hundreds of people, and I suppose that I am known by thousands; yet, if I died to-morrow, there is not one who would really care—not one who would shed a tear of genuine sorrow. Not one woman, certainly. Bah! I hate women. The young ones are such simpering, doll-faced idiots; the elder ones such spiteful, canting hypocrites. I don't believe they've a genuine feeling or emotion left in their hearts. Society, pleasure, dress, vanity, extravagance—that is their life—nothing deeper, nothing greater, nothing better; and yet there are still men who believe in them."

"Perhaps," I said, "it is because here and there a good wife—a good mother—a woman who knows what is due to womanhood, saves the rest of her sex from being utterly condemned."

She lifted her head and looked at me. "When you find such a woman," she said, bitterly, "I wish you would let me know. I will make her a 'character,' and introduce her to an ideal world, and call it a 'Study from Life.' I confess I have never come across such a being. I don't know why you should be more fortunate; unless it is that virtue has been so effectually routed out from the bosoms that beat beneath silks and laces, that she has fled in utter despair, and taken refuge in the more homely retreats of calico and homespun." Then she arose and began to assist me again in a mechanical, absent-minded fashion.

"Your late mistress is a very great lady now," she said, presently. "Her husband is a Member of Parliament. They are very rich. I asked her to call on me, but I don't suppose she will. I am only a humble, working bee, and she—one of society's butterflies."

"I don't think Miss Kate has any nonsense about her," I said, warmly. "She was always affectionate, and impulsive,

and generous. I am sure society has not spoiled her."

"Society spoils every one," said Mrs. Cray, sharply. "It is a forcing-house, where nothing natural and simple can possibly thrive."

"Miss Kate is just what she always was," I repeated, doggedly. "Just as sincere, as bright, as fascinating, as innocent."

"Bah!" exclaimed Mrs. Cray, contemptuously, "ignorance is not innocence. This is her first season. She has lived abroad, or with her babies, and flowers, and horses, buried in the country. Now she has come to London ready for all that society can give her. We will see what that will be, and how well she appreciates the gifts."

"You don't seem to like her, ma'am," I said, quietly.

She started, and coloured a little.

"Not like her? What nonsense! I am only analysing her character and its possibilities. I like her as well as I like—any woman. Certainly, that is not much. I like men, because, with all their faults, I think they are more genuine. Now and then they are incapable of a lie, and can be loyal to a woman even if they don't love her. They don't fuss, they don't pretend; they generally even prefer us to think they have too little feeling rather than too much; but for all their indifference and indolence, and contempt for emotion and jests at sentiment, where is the woman who can match them for patience, for bravery, for honour, for loyal thought and memory? I confess I have never found such a one, and I have had a pretty wide experience of both sexes."

I was silent. I did not feel qualified to give an opinion of men and women in general, having had only a limited sphere of observation; whereas Mrs. Cray—being a clever woman, and a writer, and a student of character—doubtless had made it her business to know all about them and their ways.

Of course I knew perfectly well why Mrs. Cray was talking to me like this, as well as I knew why she was always now so restless and dissatisfied, so particular about her gowns, and so constantly contrasting herself with younger women. Hadn't I seen her eyes devouring that fair, handsome, careless face of Rex Tresyllion's; hadn't I seen her flush and pale like a schoolgirl when he entered the room suddenly, or came across to speak to her, with that show of preference for her

society and conversation which had done so much harm?

I don't know whether he himself had remarked it, but I suppose he was no blinder than most young, good-looking fellows; and Mrs. Cray certainly made little secret of her liking for him. But it was only when jealousy had sharpened her feelings that she betrayed how far her infatuation had gone.

I watched her face with its stormy changes; her restlessness as she moved to and fro the room with that pretence of assisting me; and I knew that in her mind she was going over the events of that brief intimacy, feeding her hopes again on every trivial word or expression of interest that had ever fallen from his lips.

I knew nothing of her previous life—whether it had been hard or peaceful—broken by sorrow, or embittered by disappointment. I only knew her as the somewhat erratic woman I have described—a woman with whom I should have thought the feelings were always subordinate to the intellect—certainly not one who would wreck her life and her future for the sake of a romantic and rather senseless fancy.

But there, I believe there's no knowing really what a woman will do—anything and everything except just what you expect of her!

We were still engaged in the work of clearing the dining-room, when the visitors' bell rang. I went to the door and saw Mr. Tresyllion standing there.

"Is your mistress in?" he asked; and when I said "Yes," he just followed me into the room as cool as if he belonged to the family.

She received him rather coldly; being, indeed, so much on her guard and on her dignity that I was rather surprised.

He seated himself on the edge of the table, just for all the world like a school-boy.

"What are you doing, Jane?" he said; "washing up? Let me help you."

"No, thank you, sir," I said, laughing in spite of myself. "These glasses are far too brittle and delicate for men's fingers."

He glanced at Mrs. Cray, who was wiping them with a damask napkin as fast as I washed them.

"It was a great success last night, Pauline, wasn't it?" he said.

Almost every one who came there called mistress Pauline, and I suppose he had dropped into the way of it.

"Do you think so?" she said, coldly.

"One can never quite tell oneself. But I suppose it went off as well as most parties."

"I enjoyed myself hugely," he went on, swinging his foot to and fro, and looking at the neat patent-leather shoes with a contented little smile, as if he had some pleasant memory in his mind.

"Any one could see that," Mrs. Cray said, sharply, and a little angry flush rose to her face. "You seemed to admire Mrs. Carruthers immensely."

"She is a charming little woman," he said, "and has brains as well as looks. They don't often go together."

"No," said Mrs. Cray, with caustic meaning, "they don't. But when a man admires the looks he is very ready to believe in the brains, or any other gifts of intelligence with which he wishes to endow the object of his admiration."

He lifted his long eyelashes and looked at her somewhat curiously.

"Cross, Pauline?" he said.

FIRST LOVES.

If every man were compelled by law to marry his "first love," while she was his love, what singular and sorrowful marriage bonds some of us would have contracted! There would be laughing, tricksome husbands of thirteen and fourteen in abundance, and some men, not in their teens, would begin boyhood with a wedded wife. But what exorciating disillusionments would then perplex the youthful mind in the intervals of football and Euclid!

Wonderful, indeed, are our first loves. We look back upon them with a sort of chastened horror. She may have been a rotund milkmaid, with cheeks like the rose. She was then going eighteen, and we were three years younger. To us the eerie sensation was a sweet poison; tender teeth gnawing the vitals. We worshipped her comely form, whether she were tripping with airy song across the yard, milk-pail in hand, or sitting with the grace of a goddess on a three-legged stool under the contented cow. And she, what knew she of the pangs she caused? More, in truth, than she recked. For, though every look of her large, calf-like eyes, every smile which dimpled her cheek, was a fresh agony of pleasure to us—the agony being more apparent to the world than the pleasure—did she spare her smiles and glances? She were no budding woman had she spared them.

Well, the milkmaid married the head ploughboy in the heat of our romance; and now she is a horny-handed, broad matron, with more wrinkles on her face than children about her hearth; though these are not lacking.

Perhaps it were even worse for our girls if they were to be condemned to go for life with those who first won their tender hearts. But, as a rule, their attachments of this kind are secret as the nature of the stars. It is but in a whisper of consciousness that they tell themselves how stands the case with them. The object of their affection knows—and generally it is well he can know—nothing of it. He moves through the business of his life unhallowed by the knowledge, that one sweet soul watches his goings and his comings with an interest measurable only by the beating of her young heart. If he step for a moment from the path of rectitude—so it be no heinous lapse from duty—she does not love him the less, but the more. Her passion continues, and a gentle, divine pity buds from it and sanctifies it. She longs to be privileged to say a word or two which may assure him that she has faith in him, though all the world else may go against him; and, further, to help him in material needs, if that be possible. In this moment, peradventure, she does declare her love. It is from no selfish motive. Well for her and for him if he have the generosity to acknowledge that her affection is too pure and ethereal a thing for him. He may save his soul by kissing her young hand, and giving her a "God-speed" towards a happier fate than that which her nobility and indiscretion have put it in his power to allot to her.

Such is the highest kind of romantic love that a maiden's heart may know.

On the other hand, is it so very rare for a hot-tempered, strong-willed girl, to make a clandestine match with her father's groom or the gardener's son?

Disastrous is the result of such a union, be the love on the one side ever so strenuous and firm. If love may, in its origin, be described as "a passion which invariably leads the opposite sexes to invest each other with attributes which neither of them possesses," in its second stage it is even more dispassionate. None but the most heroic of women will be able to tolerate the life into which a first love of this kind may recklessly have led them.

That a first love may be consecrated with its full panoply of romance, it must

not be a one-sided affection. One can smile to see the unfledged schoolboy, crimson to his temples, striving to suggest to the chilly Seraphina or Gwendoline (a mature thing of ten or a dozen years) that she is the queen of his heart, and that ice-cream and tipsy-cake have no charms for him, unless she consent to share them with him. But it is quite another matter a year or two later—and especially in a more southern clime than ours—when the love is common to both boy and girl. Then the gates of a fool's paradise are wide before them, and the entrance bower is hung with seductions which no youthful eye may behold unmoved. Romeo and Juliet were, it is supposed, little more than children according to our reckoning. With them, love was veritably "lord of all," and brief was their felicity.

Were they willing, how many a curious tale of first-love troubles could the burly priests of Italy unfold from the store garnered in their confessionals! It would seem that the heart and the conscience come to maturity at the same time. Until she met the strong, bright gaze of Giacomo the other day, as they passed in the public street, Margarita's life was one of aimless trivialities and sublime innocence. She was with her schoolfellows at the time, and the good nun in the beetle-browed bonnet did not mark how Giacomo looked at her. And Giacomo, on his part, was with his comrades of the Jesuit school. But he knew full well, shrewd urchin, that from under his peaked cap, and through the thick cloak which he wore, he had shot a shaft straight into the heart of somebody.

Such is the beginning of a thousand little romances every year in sunny Italy. Giacomo and Margarita soon meet once more in the street. This time the interchange of glances is emphatic. If he be a shrewd phraseologist, Giacomo next writes a letter. Or he will copy the stereotyped form of adoration used by his schoolfellows on such occasions. Or, if he be profoundly vexed by his passion, he will bribe the genius of the school to compose at a white heat something that shall be invincible.

This is a specimen of the Italian school-boy's amorous arrow:

"SIGNORINA,—I am so dazzled by the surpassing brightness of your beautiful eyes, and so bewitched by the elegance of your still more beautiful figure, that I hardly know where to find terms fitly to

express the passion with which you have filled me. You, O beautiful one, are she for whom I have been sighing all my days; the reality of my ideals; the substance of my dreams.

"Let me assure you, Signorina, that I am quite serious in this declaration of my love. Do not, I implore you, ascribe it to mere boyish infatuation, built upon the sands of imagination. On the contrary; all my hopes are with you. I am for life what you choose to make me. Do not therefore condemn me to eternal ruin, now and hereafter, by a cruel rejection of my heart. I await your reply.

"GIACOMO —,

"School of the Jesuits,

"May 1st, 1888."

"— Street."

It may be imagined what a tumult the perusal of this note, safely sped—by means of sundry bribes on both sides—will cause in the breast of the innocent Margarita. It is her first step in the world's way. It tries her nature as decisively as an analyst may test a metal. Does she keep the precious document to herself as something sacred? Or does she declare her triumph to her friends, and rejoice in their congratulations? Does she, on her knees at the confessional, at once ease her soul of the criminality incurred by the reception of the letter? Does she reply to the letter, or not? Perhaps she does not heed Giacomo's appeal. But in that case, it is, a hundred to one, because she feels instinctively that her apparent insensibility will goad him into the composition of a second letter, even more passionate than the first. She was only a girl on April the thirtieth. Two days later she has developed into a woman. Her development has advanced yet another stage, when, perchance after a week, she receives Giacomo's further declaration, and, in a fit of hot gratitude, and with some sort of responsive love, she pens a few words in reply, and despatches the illicit thing to the raving boy.

"SIGNORINO,—I have received your two letters, and I assure you I am not insensible to them. I beg you to believe that I esteem you.

"MARGARITA —,

"Convent of the Blood of Mary,

"— Street."

"May 8th, 1888."

As a rule, these multitudinous romances remain romantic; and it is well that they

do. Even thus early the boys and girls realise the great law of self-sacrifice, whereby it seems that we are all seekers and clamourers for love; while they whose love we yearn for care nought for us, but are themselves tormented by love for others who care nought for them.

Sometimes, however, a first love makes a permanent impression in the victim's heart. One instance of this kind occurs to me, and it is the more worthy of mention since it involved consequences that may seem to deny the stability of the first love in this particular case. The man was mature when—if his confession was to be believed—he gave up his heart, on a sudden, one summer's day, for the first time in his life. But it was a hopeless surrender. He was poor, struggling, somewhat dull to the common eye, and of a large, loose build that did not recommend him to girlish notice in days when Lord Byron was the subtlest cordial with which women indulged their hearts, and when his lordship's pale-faced heroes were their heroes. The sorrowful man declared his passion, in an inelegant manner, as soon as he could. He found the burden of it too great to bear, he said, in spite of his broad, large frame. But it was of no avail. The conventional acknowledgement was given by the girl. She felt proud of being the recipient of Mr. —'s affection; she would be glad to number him among her friends. His wife, however, she could never be.

"Why?" pleaded the impassioned lover, in the tone we know so well.

"Because I am already engaged to Mr. —!"

He broke down for a moment. But his strong will soon regained the mastery. He ventured to take the girl's hand in his—she seeing by his face that this was the prelude to nothing desperate or scandalous—and then, having blessed her approaching nuptials in a most paternal manner, he begged her to correspond with him, and especially to inform him when her first female child was born.

I entreat my readers not to smile at, or distrust this simple tale. It is true to the core. It was but the other day that I paid a visit to the swain in question and his wife, for now that he is in the sere and yellow leaf he is married.

And who was his wife? None else than the "first female child" of the first love of his heart, who had writ herself so large upon his affections. He had tarried for a

score of years after his sudden love-frenzy; watched the babe acquire the rudiments of the art of walking, speaking, and living in general; seen her tastes grow from picture-books to dolls, from dolls to "accomplishments" of the usual kind; marked the mother in her face at all times; and had thus nurtured himself into an affection which it were better for him to have kept in subjection.

It was—it is a cruel match. The girl was high-spirited, hard to control, wayward, and coquettish. She had had several romantic experiences before she took Mr. — to husband. It was as if she were beset with a mania for falling in love with youths of low degree. She exchanged love-knots with the son of her father's lodge-keeper. He was a smart boy; and, when she rode of a morning, none but he was allowed to hold her stirrup, and escort her into the lanes. Then there was a sturdy young farmer, of an adjacent farm, with whose affections she trifled for awhile. They met "to hounds," and elsewhere. He was civil enough to put her upon her horse after an upset, and that sort of thing. Other trivial but manifest embroilments of the like kind made the girl notorious. It was a pity, for she had many excellent parts. But she was terribly self-willed.

One day a storm broke forth in the house. Her father was long-suffering; but his forbearance was not infinite. She had been seen kissing the lad of the lodge. To be sure, the lad had carried his honour with more humility than pride, being in the business but a passive instrument. And the fact that she had kissed him in public—that is, in the gravel path between the lodge and the house—and had professedly done it in a fit of momentary hot gratitude for some service rendered, all this quite freed the impetuous girl from the stigma of iniquity that the same deed done in secret would have deservedly set upon her.

However, it was not the less a terrible storm. Even her mother joined in the elemental strife.

"If only, dear Isabel, you would see how fond Mr. — is of you, all might yet be well. There would be no scandal then."

"You may marry me to Mr. — tomorrow, if you like," was the girl's haughty, indifferent reply.

"Well, we will think about that," was the mother's calm reply; and the scene ended.

The upshot was that the patient Mr. — married the daughter of his first love; and, as I have said, the marriage proved highly disastrous. How, indeed, could it be otherwise, achieved under such conditions? Isabel's temper has waxed with her years; and now she presents the sad spectacle of a woman, prematurely grey, endowed with many of the unpleasant attributes of the Furies. Her husband, poor old creature, is a philosopher, perforce. But I fear he has of late daily repented the reverence with which he worshipped his first love, and the folly which made him think to find in her daughter all the congeniality he fancied might have existed between his first love and himself.

If you ask me how such a girl came to marry such a man, I can only say in reply that the act was wrought, like other romantic acts, under a temporary aberration of sense, if not of will itself. Pique had much to do with it; but she has paid dearly for her unwisdom.

On review, it would really seem that Nature does not intend our first loves to be taken seriously. She wishes to arouse us to a sense of the actuality of life, and can do this in no more effectual way than by putting a little romance in our path. Once through the first love, the man and woman are well alive to the duties Nature expects from them. She would have good, sensible alliances; and so she begins by showing us a little folly which, while it enlightens us, may easily be avoided.

In all civilised countries these early brushes of the affections are esteemed but moderately. Even the Southerners prefer to make them the subject of poetry than engagements in earnest. A land so diverse in its constituent parts as Russia, can yet condemn romantic marriages (such as those of first loves) quite as emphatically as its misguided members can rate monarchy and all the subordinates of a monarchical régime. Tolstoi, Russia's famous modern novelist, and the very mirror of the people, among whom he is content to live as a peasant instead of an aristocrat, tells us how the agriculturists of his land regard "what we call romantic love as a disease, temporary, and painful, and dangerous," and that "with them no marriage is made under its influence." Well, it may be going rather far to term it a disease. In the beginning, at any rate, it is not a malignant disease; but it depends mainly upon those who are inoculated with it whether it be or be not, in its issue,

benignant. For my part, I enjoy the recollection of my several romantic loves (first, second, third, and fourth attachments) as I certainly should not were they like the reminiscence of so many diseases. At the same time, I am heartily glad their ending, like their beginning, was romantic.

A PRACTICAL TEST.

A COMPLETE STORY.

TOM CHESTER lived by himself in a house furnished and decorated under his own inspection—art-furniture being one of his many "fads."

"I like to strike out a line for myself in furnishing, as well as in other things," he used often to say to his friends. But the friends did not much like the line he had struck out in the smoking-room. It consisted of two oak settles, one on each side of the fire, with very straight, tall backs, and no cushions. Tom had picked them up cheap in a village inn. "So unconventional," he said. The friends, generally with a back-ache at the moment, sighed after conventionality, but said little, for Tom had very good whisky, and was a very good fellow, they all agreed, except when his favourite "fad" of all was in his mind. At the first sign of the entrance of this into the conversation, the friends usually had engagements which demanded their immediate presence. It was heralded by one particular sentence which they well knew.

"I do not believe in arbitrary class distinctions," Tom would begin. "I have, in fact, a practical test——" But at that word the sole occupant of the settles was generally Tom himself. "Ah, well!" he soliloquised on these occasions, "a successful experiment will convince not only the flippant but the thoughtful world. I can wait."

The last few words were true. Patience was certainly one of Tom's leading characteristics. Still, one night when the friends had left him in peace, he was sitting alone on the end of one of the settles, kicking the top bar of the grate, with a frown on his face, as he said to himself:

"Three years—four years—should be enough; but it is difficult work. Now, last night she did not seem to appreciate the 'French Revolution' nearly so much. Had some different frock on—thinking of that, no doubt. I'll ask Mrs. Smith to prevent that sort of distraction, at any rate—— What did you say, Mary? I

didn't ring." He turned round with a shade of irritation in his voice. "It's only seven; at half-past I shall be ready."

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Chester," corrected Tom.

"Yes, Mr. Chester. I couldn't remember what you gave me to learn."

"Couldn't remember!" began Tom. "Fetch the book here, Mary, at once."

Tom's voice made her steps speedy, and in less than three minutes she stood at the elbow of his chair with the most modern of French grammar books in her hand. He found the place he had carefully marked the night before, and was going to give her a scolding in the tone of voice from which his friends fled, when he glanced up at her—and involuntarily softened his words and tone. The girl standing by him was plainly so frightened, so very anxious to take in what he said to her now, that his scolding ended abruptly in:

"Make haste then, Mary, and never forget again."

Downstairs she ran, and, drawing a chair up to the kitchen fire, put the book and her elbows on her knees, and gave her mind to the part Tom had marked, only disturbed by the voice of Mrs. Smith, the housekeeper, as she said at intervals of five minutes, which were given to complications in her knitting:

"There, Polly, my girl, don't worry your brains too much. What master wants with teaching you such stuff, I can't think. Cooking and cleaning—that's what I was taught; and it's poor comfort master would have if no one knew nothing but books."

Mrs. Smith had made these remarks before during the eighteen months Polly had lived in Mr. Chester's house, therefore they did not engross her attention. She worked till the kitchen clock struck half-past, and then starting up, said:

"Mrs. Smith, I'm ready."

"Very well, my girl. You might straighten your hair a little, though, while I pick up these stitches."

Polly rummaged in a large, deep drawer, and at last extracted from a mass of muslin, cheap lace, and ribbon, two exercise books, a pen, and a much-worn English History. Armed with these, she, Mrs. Smith, and the knitting went upstairs.

Tom was in the library—a room containing no temptation to anything but study. He had lined it with books, and excluded all easy-chairs. The drawing-room was their place, he said, and theirs

alone in Tom's house; for no one entered the drawing-room except admiring friends of Mrs. Smith and Polly, when Tom was out and they had "company to tea."

On one straight-backed chair Tom awaited them. Mrs. Smith took another, to which she was evidently well accustomed, at the end of the table; and Polly sat down at Tom's right hand.

He had on a pair of spectacles, not needed in the least by his thirty-five years; but he had always a sort of feeling that they would be a help to him in gaining and keeping Polly's attention. Very carefully he went through the French exercise she gave him, underlining her mistakes, and only once stopping when Polly said, apologetically, "It's blotted, and that I know," to say, "You do not need the words 'and that,' Mary."

Then he went through the mistakes with her, explaining each at length; so much so, indeed, that Mary's thoughts had wandered to a "grey costume" she meant to have for Sundays, before he came to the last. She was recalled abruptly by his demand for her grammar book; but the verb committed to memory in the kitchen had more or less left it in the library, and the spectacles were wholly unnecessary aids to the gravity of Tom's countenance, when he laid down the book and took up Green's "History of the English People," which he read aloud to her on alternate nights with Carlyle, while she took notes.

She had covered about two pages of her note-book, with a straggling handwriting, when nine o'clock struck. Tom's voice and the click of Mrs. Smith's needles stopped together.

"I should like better preparation next time, Mary," he said, as he shut the book.

"Yes, Mr. Chester; good night, Mr. Chester." Followed by Mrs. Smith with a decorous "Good night, sir," Mary left the room, slowly at first; but when they reached the kitchen stairs, it did not need Mrs. Smith's "Hurry, and see after supper, Polly," to send her flying down the steps with a swiftness which gave the books she threw on the table impetus enough to send them off again. Tom put away the books, took off his spectacles, and stood by the fire, lighting a cigar with some deliberation, and thinking of the work he had tried to do that evening, and on many an evening before. His "fad" was very near his heart. Two years before, when Mrs. Smith

told him that her failing powers needed the help of younger eyes and fingers to keep his house, it had occurred to him that here was the opportunity he had long wanted, to prove his theory that education alone transformed a man into a "gentleman," a woman into a "lady"; that the accident of birth was nothing, for all class distinctions were the mere arbitrary growth of ages of ignorance.

He enquired carefully into the system of teaching pursued at most of the large orphanages, and having discovered the one he considered most complete, took from it Mary, aged fifteen, bright, intelligent, and with a manner neither too assured nor too shy. "Excellent ground," he said to himself. "She will assist my housekeeper, and her education will be carried on by myself," he said to the head of the institution, who stared, but said nothing.

At eighteen he meant to send her to a thoroughly good finishing school for a year, to acquire whatever might be beyond his own power to give; and then he would reach the crowning point of his "practical test"—he would marry her.

And the only day-dream Tom ever had was one of a day when he would be able to say, in a large room full of incredulous people, including most of the friends: "Allow me to introduce—my wife." Whilst whispers should fall on his ears of "Charming woman!" "Curiously successful case."

It was a wet Sunday. Tom had turned over books, smoked, and used strong language about the weather, most of the day; and at four o'clock he could no longer endure it, but hailed the first break in the clouds, and set out for a house where he had a standing invitation from an old friend of his family for "Any Sunday afternoon." He very seldom availed himself of this, for he cared little for society, and had no great liking for this special form of it. But he felt it part of his work not to lose touch with the world which was to welcome his wife—to acknowledge the success of his experiment.

Mrs. Courtley was "at home," and Tom was shown into her large, bright drawing-room, a cheering contrast to the wet streets, and his own library. It was full of people, and Tom had for a moment some difficulty in seeing his little, keen-eyed, sparkling hostess. He made his way to her, and was greeted laughingly by her with:

"Well, Mr. Chester, is Diogenes your ideal at present? I thought I had lost you as a guest; an old woman doesn't like that. Never mind, sir, I shall forgive you this time, though you don't deserve it. You're a favourite of mine, do you know. And now you want some one younger than myself to talk to. Let me introduce you to my niece, Lady Maria Wood. Maria, my dear," to a tall girl who had been standing near the fire, but turned at the words, and acknowledged Mr. Chester's bow.

"Let me get you a chair," said Tom to her, being the first thing he thought of.

"Thank you," she said, with a smile. "I was sitting here just now, behind Aunt Sarah; there's room; sit down, won't you? Do you know my aunt well? She seemed to have missed you. I've never been here before, and I don't know any one. I do so want to; and I can't very well go up to Aunt Sarah, and say, for instance, 'Who is the old gentleman in the very shabby brown coat?' He's some one clever, I know; he's written a book or something. Do tell me if you know. I've never been in London before; my home's in Ireland. Isn't that a confession!—the first, I mean—well, both, perhaps."

She had chattered fast, and stopped a moment to rest, leaving Tom leisure to glance at her face, while he tried to frame an answer which should belong to all her queries.

A sweet, round, girlish face met his eyes—young, fair, with soft brown hair all round it. The slight, young figure looked slighter still in the dark-green cloth dress she wore; and Tom saw that he was talking to a young woman belonging to a class he had often contemptuously described as "neither one thing nor the other," neither schoolgirl nor woman.

But contempt was the feeling furthest from Tom that afternoon. He listened to her chatter, and gave her information concerning things and persons in London, which was a little vague and reckless; but laughed and confessed himself frankly when she said, after one or two of his most astonishing statements, in her pretty voice:

"Are you sure, Mr. Chester?"

When Mrs. Courtley came up to their corner, and said, "Maria, you will sing to us?" Tom, to his own great surprise, found himself offering to turn over her pages. Directly after, it occurred to him that he knew not a note of music, and should probably make a muddle of it.

"Never mind," he said to himself, "it's a song. I'll go for the words."

And go for the words he did, manfully; and afterwards her pretty, "Thank you, Mr. Chester; you turned them exactly right," helped to make him really vexed to realise that it was six o'clock, and he must at once find Mrs. Courtley and take his leave, if he meant to be in time for a never-neglected 'Sunday duty—tea in the library with Mrs. Smith and Polly.

He was quite in time. Polly—in a dark green dress, with a wide stripe of bright red all down the front, bordered with shining and wonderful buttons, the whole copied with infinite pains from one she had seen in church, and mentally exaggerated during her walk home—had just brought up tea.

"Tell Mrs. Smith I'm in," Tom said to her; whereupon she ran down the kitchen stairs and reappeared with Mrs. Smith.

They sat down, and Tom began the conversation, as he always did on these occasions, by what he flattered himself were brief, well-chosen allusions to the simpler topics of the day. Mrs. Smith's replies were chiefly, "Yes, sir; really, sir; no, sir," in unvarying order, with no regard to the subject under discussion. Polly's remarks, Tom prided himself, had lately shown growing intelligence; but to-night it seemed to him she was more apt than ever before to break into his own decidedly elevating topic, with references to "that dreadful poisoning case in Hoxton," and "that murder at Manchester."

Her frock, too, surely it wasn't quite what it should be—and yet he had seen friends of his in something like that. He thought she sat unusually awkwardly on her chair, too, and she had apparently quite forgotten his bygone remonstrances on the subject of grammatical errors.

Tom felt very disheartened when Polly, Mrs. Smith, and the tea-things had gone downstairs. He had watched Polly fold the table-cloth with an odd sense of a difference between those strong, firm, pink hands, and the white ones he had seen playing with her fire-screen, as their owner talked to him in Mrs. Courtley's drawing-room, three hours before.

"But she'll get on all right with patience," said Tom to himself, with returning hope, as he filled his second pipe in the smoking-room, "and I might, perhaps, speak about that frock."

At the end of the next week Tom had a

letter, which he had for some time been vaguely expecting. He received it, however, not without a great deal of grumbling. A cousin with whom, in spite of his many odd ways, Tom had always been a favourite, had made him promise to come to her wedding.

"Some time next summer," she had said when she told him he "must come."

May—early in May as it was, too—hardly struck Tom as summer. Still, he put that down to the general unreliableness and unreasonableness of women's plans, and, with several heavy sighs, packed his portmanteau.

Anything out of the ordinary routine of his life he disliked intensely; and now he felt a martyr indeed, for he had been weak enough, as he called it on the way down, to obey a sentence in his cousin's letter which had said:

"And you must come on Monday, Tom. If you only come on Wednesday, I shouldn't see you. Several other people are coming on Monday, too."

He reached his destination rather late in the evening, and came into the drawing-room after he had dressed for dinner, only just in time to be told:

"Take in Lady Maria Wood with you. Girl over there—white frock, brown hair."

Very much astonished, Tom made his way to her. She received him with a little start, and said in the pretty voice Tom had remembered clearly for the last ten days:

"Oh, Mr. Chester, I'm so glad to see you. I didn't know you were to be here. Lucy only said, 'my cousin.'"

"Then you know Lucy?" Tom said, feeling at the same time that this statement of a self-evident fact could hardly be called a brilliant conversational effort.

"Oh, yes, we were at school together. I never knew she was your cousin till the other day. How stupid I am! How could I know? I'm to be her bridesmaid. Don't you hope it'll be fine on Wednesday, and to-morrow, too, that we may have some tennis?"

Tom said, hastily, that there was nothing he had more at heart, or words to that effect.

But whether his wishes were immediately and literally concerned or not, the weather next day could not better have met Lady Maria's. It was remarkable for characteristics foreign to most days in May—it was both warm and fine. Most of the people staying in the house spent the greater part of the day playing tennis.

Among them, of course, Tom and Lady Maria. And, at the end of the day, Tom could not in the least make up his mind whether Lady Maria's pretty figure and sweet face shone most to advantage in her loose, soft flannel tennis frock, or the trim, dark one he had first seen her in.

"How do some women know what to buy, and not others?" he wondered idly, as he sat under the trees getting cool after an exciting and exhausting victory.

The first night Tom dreamt of Lady Maria at frequent intervals; on the second he could not sleep at all for the thought of her; and he got up on the third morning determined that he would "put his fate to the touch"—ask her if there was any hope at all for him. As to Polly, "his practical test," his final triumph to come—a pair of bright blue eyes, a pretty face, and sweet, girlish ways had taken them utterly out of Tom's life for the moment.

He was thoroughly head over ears in love with Lady Maria.

"If she won't have me? Well, let's only hope she will," was all the reasoning Tom was capable of, during his shaving that morning.

Luncheon time came; Tom had not nerved himself for the crisis.

At two o'clock the wedding came off, and Tom stood in the church feeling every moment worse, while he watched Lady Maria, who seemed to him more lovely than ever in her faint yellow silk.

The afternoon went by; the bride was gone, every one else going by the evening train, as Tom himself meant to do.

He pulled his courage together; found Lady Maria in the garden; told her he never afterwards could remember what; and listened breathlessly for her answer.

It came:

"Oh, Mr. Chester, I'm so sorry; but—but I'm engaged! I'm so sorry, though."

He caught the earliest possible train, and had nearly reached home, when his arm was seized by one of the friends—the most obnoxious of them all, Tom thought him at that moment.

"Oh, Chester, old fellow!" he began; "been down at that wedding, haven't you? See Maria Wood there? Told me she was going. Nice girl, don't you think? We're engaged, you know. Only a fortnight, though; not at all too late for your congratulations."

Tom was close to his own door. He took out his latch-key, and saying to the some-

what discomfited friend: "All right, you shall have them—some time," let himself in and slammed the door. There was a bright fire in the library. Polly brought his slippers and lit the lamp.

Gradually Tom began to feel a more placid frame of mind coming over him. Lady Maria was sweet. Tom gave a very heavy sigh. She was—well, everything; but, after all, what was the use of thinking about it now? And he could still do mankind that great service, still show them his principle proved by his practical test; and, who could tell!—many might go and do likewise, and the result for the race be beyond words to describe.

The warm glow known only to the benefactor of his race was beginning to overcome Tom's crushed feeling of despair; the fire was warming him thoroughly. He had just decided to send for Polly for an hour's reading, and had mentally chosen the finishing school, when Mrs. Smith's tread was heard outside.

"Come in," Tom said, in answer to her knock.

She came in; stood just inside, twisting her black apron. At last, when Tom turned hastily round and said: "Well?" she began:

"Yes, sir. Polly, she didn't like to come and tell you herself. She's that silly, when I tell her you'd be sure to be pleased; it's a very good thing for her. Well, sir, it's the postman that brings the evening letters. He's wanted her ever so long; and now he wants her to name the day, and they'll have the banns put up next Sunday—if you're agreeable, sir!"

CITIZEN SOLDIERS.

WHEN the poet Cowper wrote of his famous John Gilpin,

A train-band Captain eke was he,
Of famous London town,

the description did not seem to call for any particular remark. People had heard of the City train-bands, although those military companies had ceased to exist, or had been absorbed in the militia. Not that these trained bands, to give them their official title, were confined to the famous London town. All over the country trained bands had, in a measure, replaced the general array of the liege-men of the Crown. And they are defined in an Order of the Lords of the Council in the reign of James the First, as "such trained numbers as, in Her

late Majesty's time, were put into companies by the name of the trained bands." Indeed, the origin of the force is to be found, just three centuries ago, during the alarm caused by the prospect of a Spanish invasion.

Earlier even than the trained bands was the Artillery Company of London, which was incorporated by charter of King Henry the Eighth, in 1537. This was in the year following the Pilgrimage of Grace, when the sturdy malcontents of the North had marched forty thousand strong and threatened, for a time, the very existence of the monarchy, while Henry had only a few thousand hastily raised levies to oppose to them. The citizens of London were loyal, and firmly attached to the new order of things; and among them were numbers used to arms, and taking pleasure in their exercise. Some of these had associated in a guild, or fraternity, of Saint George devoted to the practice of archery, and this guild, it seems, was the foundation of the Artillery Company.

The charter of the latter directs that certain persons therein named, should be "overseers of the science of Artillery, that is to say, for long bows, cross bows, and hand gonnes." This definition excludes what we understand by Artillery. But there was the Society of Tower Gunners exercising on the same ground as the Company, that is in the Artillery Gardens, once existing between Bishopsgate and Spitalfields—the site of which is still preserved in memory by Artillery Row, Artillery Lane, and Artillery Street; in the latter of which, by the way, exists a public-house called "The Tower," which may once have given entertainment to these same Tower gunners.

The City, however, had doubtless its own "great gonnes." An interesting record among the City archives, epitomised by H. T. Riley, gives an inventory of the City ordinance, as it existed in the reign of Edward the Third, A.D. 1339, when the City had a number of such instruments of war stored in the house called la Bretashe, near the Tower; the name implying a wooden erection overhanging the walls, whence heavy missiles could be hurled at any attacking the defences beneath.

The City had always provided for its own defence. Its organisation was as much military as civil. The Wards, into which it was divided, had the safety of the City walls and gates as their principal motives,

and the Alderman of each Ward was just as much expected to lead his fellow-citizens to battle as to preside over their assemblies, or represent them at the general council. He had to see which persons were able to bear arms and which not, and to view their arms; for these the citizen provided for himself at his own cost.

During quiet, peaceful times, the daily and nightly watch and ward was of a quiet, perfunctory character. "Every Bedel shall make summons by day in his own ward, upon view of two good men, for setting watch at the gates. And those so summoned shall come to the gates in the day time, and in the morning at daylight shall depart therefrom. And such persons are to be properly armed with two pieces." Should any make default, the Bedel was to hire another person at the rate of twelve pence, which he levied upon the defaulter. But when the country was disturbed, and warlike Lords were in the field with their retainers, special ordinances were issued, and each City gate was strongly guarded. Newgate was occupied each night by a band of twenty-four citizens, furnished by the neighbouring Wards, and had four regular warders; the other gates had guards varying in number, from fourteen to twenty; the former number occupied the gate-house on London Bridge, and a band of thirty-eight watchers patrolled the outlying region of Bankside.

When the bell of St. Martin's-le-Grand began to toll the curfew, the great gates were all shut, and those who were abroad beyond the gates had to scurry for it if they hoped to enter the City; the wicket-gates were still open, but only till the curfew ceased ringing. Then all was made fast, the keys delivered to the nearest Alderman, and none could be admitted without a special precept from Alderman or Mayor. And then what a restful quiet must have come upon the walled city; all traffic ended, and lights here and there feebly twinkling from the upper casements of the quaint, gabled houses; and among the clustered columns of some old priory church, a gleam from the light before the sacred altar.

How the honest burgher-guard amused themselves during the long night in the chilly, vaulted guard-chamber, is but a matter for conjecture. Doubtless, they built a roaring fire in the great, open chimney, and told stories, and played at shovel-board, and sang a little, and slept a good deal. They had neither cards nor

tobacco to cheer their vigils ; but in one way or another the night would pass. No one could enter "until bell rung at Saint Thomas of Acon," and this was the hour of prime, about six a.m., when for the greater part of the year it would be still dark. But there were numerous country-folk who had lawful business in the City at this hour—milkwomen, with their vessels ; gardeners, with fruit and vegetables ; and all kinds of petty traders. For these the wicket-gate was opened, and the little crowd filed in, passing under the blazing cressets, and closely scrutinised by the warders. Sooner or later the first rays of sunlight would appear gilding the cross of St. Paul's, and glittering upon the hundred spires of the City churches, and the great gates would be thrown open and carts come rumbling in, and the business of the day begin in earnest.

During the day, at each gate, would be posted six men, "right vigorous and powerful, and well armed, to oversee those entering and going forth." And all day the warders were to watch from the leads over the gateways, and, if they saw any approaching on great horses, or in armour, then was the chain to be drawn across the gateway and the new-comers challenged.

"Lordings, take not this amiss ; but the King has given it in charge to us to admit none in arms into this city. But you who are upon your palfreys, and you folks without horses and arms, you may enter."

If they turned not about at this address, then up went the portcullis, which was raised by winches and chains from the chamber above the gate, where men were waiting, bare-armed, ready for the signal.

Later on, in Edward the Third's Scotch wars, a hundred horsemen and a hundred footmen, all stout men-at-arms, were sent to the King, in Scotland, under Edmund Flambard. The men selected were again "chosen and surveyed" by the Mayor and Aldermen. Whereupon each man-at-arms received ten marks and his gowns, the same being for himself, and his groom, and his horse, for going to the King and returning, and staying forty days after coming to him.

The City did the matter handsomely, it must be confessed, for the sum paid was equivalent to a hundred and fifty pounds at the present value of money. And, besides money and gowns, the City provided lances, standards, and a minstrel—the precursor of the regimental bands of

to-day. And a jovial company they were, no doubt, as they marched through the pleasant English country, with a welcome at every town and village, and singing and dancing at night under the old elms on the village green.

A few years later the City was fortified against a possible attack by the French war vessels ; but, while these defensive measures were taken, considerable reinforcements were sent out to the King in France. These were, no doubt, chiefly professional soldiers, who were sure to present themselves in shoals where the pay was good and secure. But the youth of the City were familiar with all sorts of warlike exercises. Thus we are told by Fitzstephen, a monk of Canterbury, who wrote not long after the death of Becket, how, every Saturday in Lent, "a noble train of young men take the field on horses of the best mettle ; the lay sons of citizens rush out of the gate in shoals, furnished with lances and shields, and the younger having lances without points. If the King happens to be near the City, he is sure to be a spectator."

At Easter there were similar martial sports on the river—quintain, and tilting, and sword-play ; the balconies of the bridges—that is, of the landing-stages as well as of the houses on the bridge—being filled with spectators. Nor had the martial spirit of the citizens declined with the lapse of centuries.

All this was in the days of the Plantagenets, when a strong confidence and affection existed between King and City. Even in the dry records of the City archives these feelings appear. To the citizens the King was "their most dear liege lord," and the King addressed his faithful citizens as dearest and most beloved. And not only was a good guard kept in the faithful City, but reinforcements were sent to the King in his Scotch or French wars. There was weeping and wailing in the City after Bannockburn, and the news of Crécy and Poitiers set everybody mad with joy and pride.

Again, when the King was old and worn, and all his victories had come to naught, his son, the Black Prince, dead and cold under his canopied tomb in Christ Church, Canterbury, French galleys had been cruising about the Channel, their crews landing here and there, burning and destroying, and now they were reported as lying off the Foreland of Tenet—the North Foreland as we call it now—intending, doubtless, to sail up the Thames and at-

tempt the City, even then a good place to plunder. Also the citizens had to defend "the ships of our lord the King, then lying at Le Redeclyve, and in the water of Thames." Ships without sailors, lying there, forlorn and dismantled; and these the enemy might destroy or carry off. So that watch was set between the Tower and Billingsgate with forty men-at-arms, and sixty archers, and the gates of the City and the City walls were fully manned.

Next, instead of the Wards, they had the Guilds, or City companies, to undertake the defence of the City. On Tuesday, the Drapers and Tailors were on guard; on Wednesday, the Mercers and Apothecaries. Fishmongers and Butchers held the fort on Thursday; and on Friday, the Pelterers and Vintners. On Saturday, Goldsmiths and Saddlers kept watch and ward; and on Sunday, while the rest of the City were at their devotions or diversions, the cognate Guilds of Ironmongers, Armourers, and Cutlers were on sentry-go upon the battlements. The weekly round of military duty was completed by the Tawyers, Spurriers, Bowyers, and Girdlers, who clubbed together to furnish the daily quota.

It would take too long to follow the fortunes of the City array during the troubled times that followed the deposition of Richard the Second, and that ended with the accession of Henry the Seventh. The warlike force and money power of the City, generally turned the scale in favour of the side that won its support. The City proved to be the true King-maker; and the House of Tudor graciously acknowledged its influence and power. The charter of the Artillery Company—already noticed as granted by Henry the Eighth to the Guild of Archers exercising in the City—must be regarded as a proof of his confidence in his faithful citizens. To this day the Company claims the privilege of furnishing a guard during any Royal visit to the City; and from the time of their institution they have been, with few exceptions, regarded with especial favour by the occupants of the throne.

When the trained bands came into existence in 1585, during the alarm caused by the threatened Spanish invasion, the Artillery Company, though not officially connected with them, is thought to have furnished many of their officers, and to have been the nucleus of a disciplined force. And a writer of the period mentions the experienced soldiers and captains of the

Artillery Gardens, many of them selected to take command of trained bands in various parts of the kingdom. The "gardens" in Bishopsgate—eventually surrounded with houses—proved inconvenient, and in 1614 the Company was granted the use of the uppermost field in Finsbury. In 1641 the Company obtained a grant on lease of their present ground, which they have thus occupied without interruption for nearly two centuries and a half.

With the accession of the House of Stuart, came a certain unfortunate change in the relations between the Crown and the Company. The Stuarts were incorrigible meddlers; and King Charles the First endeavoured to impose his own chosen captains upon the Company. Such as were trained in the Artillery Gardens, the Lord Mayor of years before had informed the Council, "were voluntary scholars, and followed the practice of arms only for their pleasure." Later on the King would have taken the Company into his own hands; but the temper of the citizens was such that this was of little avail. The captains were there, but where were the soldiers; and when pay-day came round, where was the gallant captain's stipend? Still, although the Company refused to be made an instrument of arbitrary power, its loyal traditions prevented its taking any direct part against the King. During the Civil Wars, the Company remained as it were in abeyance. No new members were received, but from the Artillery Gardens came many of the subordinate officers who fought on one side or the other, but chiefly on behalf of the Parliament, and especially in the trained bands of the City.

A distinguished part was that of these trained bands in the early years of the great Civil War. Some time previously the City had been apportioned into four "quarters," after the Roman models, for military purposes, each of which had its regiment or trained band with distinguishing colours; and these regiments formed the backbone of my Lord General's army when he marched into the west to relieve the city of Gloucester, then closely beleaguered by the King's army. In an exhaustive History of the Honourable Artillery Company, Mr. G. A. Raikes has printed the diary of a soldier of the Red Regiment of Trained Bands, on the march to Gloucester, which is of considerable interest.

While Gloucester was being provisioned,

the army under Essex lay at Tewkesbury, while the King had his head-quarters at Evesham, prepared to fall upon his enemies at the first favourable opportunity. Suddenly and secretly the Parliamentary General began his retreat, halting the night at Cirencester, which was first stormed and captured from the Cavaliers. Then through Cricklade and Swindon poured the Parliamentary Army, the trained band driving along before it a noble booty of a thousand sheep and sixty cattle, taken from "malignants and Papists." But these were mostly recaptured by Rupert's pursuing cavalry, with whom there were constant skirmishes. The next point was Newbury; but the King was there before them and barred their further progress. So they lay all night in the fields, and next day began the battle.

"The Train Bands," writes the stout citizen soldier, who chronicles the campaign, "stood in open companies on the right." There they stood, and there they remained, a solid phalanx of steel, impervious to the fierce charges of Rupert's cavalry, stood as "a bulwark and rampire," against which the battle roared in vain. That day showed what citizen soldiers could do, and when night came on they slept in their ranks on the field of battle, expecting a renewed attack on the morrow. But in the night the King had drawn off, and, after burying their dead, the Parliamentarians continued their retreat, and arrived at Reading next day, where they were warmly welcomed and obtained the rest and refreshment they so much needed. The rest of the march was but a pleasant progress through Maidenhead and Brentford back to their head-quarters in the City, where they were received with the greatest joy and thankfulness, for rumours had come in that the trained bands had been destroyed in a great battle.

As the Parliamentary Army became more and more a complete military engine under Cromwell and Fairfax, the importance of the trained bands diminished, and we do not hear much about them under the stern Protectorate of Cromwell.

The Artillery Company, however, still maintained itself on the voluntary footing. It furnished a guard of honour for the Protector's funeral, the men completely armed and habited, "with a black feather" in their steel caps. But they were otherwise habited when they shared in the rejoicings attending the Restoration, and the splendour of their general costume may

be imagined from a description of their appearance some years later: "Very gallantly and richly habited; many of the musketeers in buff, with head pieces of massive silver; all with red feathers," and with rich embroidered belts. The greatest and most splendid of the restored nobility were of the Company: the Duke of Buckingham—that wild and waggish demirep—the Duke of Ormond, my Lords Craven and Sandwich. The Duke of York was gallantly entertained by the Company at Merchant Taylors' Hall, and the young Duke of Monmouth was borne on the roll of service.

Great would be the excitement in the City when the Company appointed one of its general days; then would the columns march through the City with music and banners, and a train of Artillery. Dividing into two parties, one called Greeks, the other Romans, there would be a grand encounter, with skirmishes about Holborn and Snow Hill, and ambuscades and alarms among the old Inns of Court. The Plague put a stop to the exercises for a while, and the Great Fire made a breach in the wall of the enclosure of the Artillery-grounds in Bunhill Fields, but penetrated no further.

Handsomely as the Company had treated the Duke of York, when the latter became King, he had no more consideration for them than for the rest of the world. He would have suppressed them altogether, but that William of Orange suppressed King James instead, and afterwards, as King, restored their privileges, and became himself their Captain-General. When William died, Anne's husband took command. In all City pageants the Artillery figured as one of the most popular elements of the show. It was the custom on Lord Mayor's Day for the Company to meet his lordship as he disembarked from his barge at Blackfriars after his visit to Westminster, and to conduct him to the Guildhall. On one occasion, in later times, a Lord Mayor, himself a dissatisfied member of the Company, would have none of its services, and secured a military guard of some other description. The Court of Assistants—the executive power—expelled the Lord Mayor with others who had joined the procession, "for marching with other military bodies." The Court of Assistants, by the way, conducted all the civil business of the corps, and also the general direction of its military affairs, and when any field-

day was in prospect, they would vote "that the battalion be placed under the command of the Field Officer."

During the eighteenth century, while the City trained bands were replaced by the more regular establishment of the militia, the Artillery Company continued to flourish. With the changes in military dress and tactics, the tenue and discipline of the corps underwent corresponding alterations. Helmets and buffs were exchanged for scarlet laced coats and cocked hats. The Company took some share in repressing the Gordon Riots; and a well-known print represents the Artillery Company and the London Association drawn up across Broad Street, at one end of which the mob are engaged in pillaging and gutting houses, while the scene is lighted by the lurid flames of burning buildings. The Major in command, bareheaded, has just given the word to fire, and the fusillade has commenced at one end of the line, while others are bringing their pieces to the present. In the foreground are tipsy, dishevelled women and men half-mad with drink, while the surgeon of the corps is humanely assisting a wounded rioter.

No such terrible experience as this has since been known by the Honourable Artillery Company. But in 1848 they took part in the scheme of defence adopted in the City, when riots were apprehended in connection with the presentation of the great Chartist petition. Then the Artillery Company garrisoned the Guildhall, and they were also to hold Southwark Bridge, in case of any organised attempt upon the City.

In earlier days during the great French War, the Artillery Company stood at the head of all the volunteer regiments who were organised to resist Napoleon's threatened invasion. At the great review in Hyde Park in 1799, the Prince of Wales, as Captain-General of the corps, received his good old father, King George, at the head of the Artillery Company. In 1806 the Company attended Lord Nelson's funeral; indeed, there have been few occasions when the Company has not been represented in matters of State or pageant occurring in the City. In some respects the constitution of the Company has undergone a change. Instead of electing its own officers, as the Company had for centuries claimed the right to do, all these are now appointed by the Crown, although the Court of Assistants is still in existence which has always regulated the financial

and civil affairs of the Company. Other changes may be imminent; but it is to be hoped that nothing will be allowed to efface the ancient esprit de corps connected with this most ancient of all military bodies in the United Kingdom, which has lasted from the time of bows and arrows to those of Maxim guns and magazine rifles.

CONCERNING NONSENSE.

PERHAPS it may be thought by some an absurdity to speak of nonsense as a Fine Art; but then we have it on high authority that

A little nonsense now and then
Is relished by the wisest men.

And we must remember that nonsense is not necessarily language which has no meaning. In fact, the essence of nonsense is that it should bear the appearance of sense. We altogether take exception to Webster's definition of "nonsense verses," for instance. He says: "Nonsense verses are lines made by taking any words which occur, but especially certain words which it is desired to recollect, and arranging them without reference to anything but the measure, so that the rhythm of the lines may assist in remembering the words of which they are composed."

Let the reader take up any of the verses of Edward Lear—lately extolled by the "Quarterly Review" as the most accomplished writer of nonsense of our time—and note how far they are from realising this definition. There must be method in the madness, or nonsense becomes merely irritating instead of amusing. For nonsense, in its literary relations, is really a Fine Art. It must be written by a genius, or it is intolerable. It must, in fact, be capable of being analysed, classified, and reduced to sense. Not that we want to do it—as the "Quarterly Review," for instance, does. That spoils the charm. All we want to feel is, that the art is there, and then to enjoy it. We cannot do that always, if the nonsense is only of the fun analogous to that provoked in the crowd at the sight of an elderly man chasing his hat down the street.

That which excites the laughter of the vulgar is not nonsense exhibited as a Fine Art. There is a difference between vulgar ridicule and genuine mirth, just as there is a difference between wit and humour. Many persons have attempted to define the difference, but few with

success. The essence of humour often merely lies in the sudden interpolation of the unexpected—as, for instance, in Charles Lamb's hare-and-wig story.

Erasmus, we know, esteemed the wisest of men, once penned a work in praise of Folly. It is, in truth, a laboured and ponderous, and not very laughter-provoking book, but it is characterised by a certain grim humour. A lesser light, Taylor, the Water-Poet, once wrote about "Nonsense upon Sence; the Essence, Quintessence, Insence, Innocence, Difference, and Magnificence of Nonsense," which has some merit. Albeit, Taylor, as may be gathered from his title, relied rather much upon punning and playing with words. As thus:

The impartiallest satire that ever was seen,
That speaks truth without fear, or flattery, or spleen,
Read as you list, commend it, or come mend it;
The man that pen'd it did with Finis end it.

It has been said of Sir Richard Blackmore's "Satire upon Wit," that if not witty itself, it was the cause of wit in others.

Thomas D'Urfey's "Pills to Purge Melancholy," were supposed to be composed of Wit and Mirth, and were prescribed with the advice to "laugh and be fat."

Addison, who could not sufficiently admire the facetious title of D'Urfey's work, was of opinion that "the above pills would be extremely proper to be taken with asses' milk, and might contribute towards the renewing and restoring of decayed things."

But does any one take the dose now? The nonsense of the past seems dull enough to most of us in these days, which is why, perhaps, we do not recognise the spirit of caricature which some learned persons imagine infused the Egyptian artists of thousands of years ago, whose works we now solemnly regard as of almost sacred significance.

Yet why should we think that nonsense was not so much the property of the prehistoric world as of the present? Primeval man, in the dim forest-swamps of old, which now form our coal-beds, doubtless enjoyed his joke when the troublesome sabre-tooth would allow him. Patriarchal Noah could, for a time, forget the cares of his flocks and herds, and sons and daughters, in lighter diversions; and Solomon has told us that there is a time to laugh as well as a time to weep. Homer could find a theme, worthy of even his mighty pen, in a frolicsome war between frogs and

mice. Virgil could sing of a gnat and a cake; Ovid of a nut; and Chaucer of a cock and hen.

It is true that Artemus Ward thought of Chaucer that "Mr. C. had talent, but he could not spell; he is the worst speller I ever knew." But he had plenty of fun. So also had Artemus himself, whose spelling was even more eccentric; and perhaps those who come to consider the subject of nonsense as a Fine Art, will be more disposed to select Artemus Ward as an illustration than Dan Chaucer. Yet Shakespeare was master of the art, as he was of all arts. The serious Milton could picture

Sport that wrinkled care derides,
And laughter holding both her sides;

the "melancholy Cowper" could write the diverting story of "John Gilpin;" and the ponderous Samuel Johnson is said by his biographer to have been incomparable at buffoonery.

In truth, some of the spirit of childhood remains with every man who is not either a Casaubon or a scoundrel, and the larger the infusion of that spirit the happier the man.

Perhaps one might urge that nonsense is more an art than a natural gift, as Uncle Tulliver thought of politics. "Every man," said Addison, "would be a wit if he could;" and the properties which the essayist considered essential to wit are—delight and surprise. He differentiated, however, between "true wit," which is "the resemblance of ideas," and "false wit," which is "the resemblance of words"—from which one may conclude that what Addison meant by wit is not the same thing as the nonsense which we are now told to regard as a Fine Art. In truth, the professional wits of the eighteenth century would probably be regarded as intolerable bores in nineteenth century society.

Instead of the old satires, we have that which is called "persiflage," for want of a better English name. We can still enjoy Lucian, and Gulliver, and Corporal Trim, but we cannot swallow Pope's "Rape of the Lock." In our nonsense-writers we want a combination of the two kinds of wit that Addison indicated. We want a play of words as well as of fancy; an exuberance of imagination, as well as a frothy sparkling of language. As with our wine, so with our nonsense; it must be clear, light, sparkling, and dry.

But there are various brands. There is humorous literature, and nonsense litera-

ture. The comic writers are not of the same category as the nonsense-writers. We would not class Mr. Burnand with Edward Lear—although the "Quarterly Review" is inclined to do so, while proclaiming Edward Lear to be the creator of "a new and important kind of that nonsense for which the pen and pencil contend."

Now Lear's verses are very funny, when you take them in small doses.

His Owl and Pussy-cat who went out to sea in a beautiful pea-green boat; his Jumblies who went to sea in a sieve; his Dong with the Luminous Nose; his Quangle-Wangle; and all the other strange creatures he discovered and immortalised, are all irresistible, when you don't have too much of them. Nonsense is certainly made both charming and melodious by Edward Lear; yet it can hardly be said that he was the creator of this brand. Our old friend who went into the garden to pluck a cabbage-leaf wherewith to make an apple-pie, might have something to say on the subject, if it came to a trial for patent-rights.

But, after all Lear's nonsense has not the subtle and enduring quality of that of Calverley and Lewis Carroll. The nonsense which Alice found herself compelled to talk and to listen to in Wonderland, and behind the Looking-glass, has far more of the true quality of wit than one finds among the Quangle-Wangles, and Jonghy-Bonghy Bos. The weird tale of the Snark arrests one more than the curious story of the Dong. However, Lear was more nonsensical than Lewis Carroll, perhaps, but if there is to be immortality in nonsense-writing, we must expect it where it is animated by the most art. And thus the Hatter, and Humpty-Dumpty, and the Queen of Hearts may all be remembered when the Dong and the Jumblies are forgotten. The Quangle-Wangle may die, but the Snark will live, for it is the misfortune of many people in hunting for a Snark to find only a Boojum.

A MAN'S FRIENDS.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

By B. DEMPSTER.

Author of "Mrs. Silas B. Bunthorpe," "No," etc. etc.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

"WELL, Jenkins, are you going to funk it?"

"No."

But Jenkins—a lad of about twelve—

still lingered, some feeling struggling for utterance in his usually expressionless face.

It was a dark, spring night. The air chill, but full of the perfumes of new-turned earth and rising sap. A scented poplar grew close to where the boys were standing, near a little gate, on the outskirts of their school-ground. Its fragrance of budding leaf was so sweet, that it touched even the unobserving and, at this moment, keenly excited senses of the two schoolboys plotting there at the wicket-gate. The first one gave a sniff of appreciation.

"Jolly scent, isn't it, Jenkins?"

But, to Jenkins, the scent, the chill air, the night darkness, seemed to mingle together, and stir his soul more deeply with the vague uneasiness which already troubled it.

He never passed near a poplar afterwards, without some such feeling moving him again.

"Of course, if you're going to funk it—" in scornful disappointment exclaimed Lethbridge again, with that appreciative sniff disposing of the poplar.

"I'm not!" irritably. "I've never funk'd anything you've asked me to do yet!"

"No; that you haven't!" with a note of affectionate admiration, its value slightly marred by another of patronising kindness. "You have stuck to me through thick and thin since——"

"You thrashed that brute Davis for me. And I'll stick to you yet——"

"All right. It's a compact; you do what I want, and I'll fight your battles!" with a laugh. "I'd trust you through fire and water," went on Lethbridge, knowing perfectly well how the eyes of the other boy, in whose arm he had linked his own, lighted with pleasure, "and that's why I've asked you to do this. I'd have gone myself, you know, only we gave our word of honour to the Doctor that we would not attempt to leave the boundaries again after lock-up. As it is, I've risked a good deal by coming out now, to meet you. If old Hudson found I had left my room, he wouldn't let me go up for the Bayle Scholarship to-morrow, and then it would be good-bye to my future. I wish I could go——"

"You cut back to the house," with feverish eagerness. "I told you I was going; but just tell me this. Do you think it is—right?" he dropped his voice

at the work, with a nervous glance about him as if half ashamed of its utterance.

Lethbridge certainly stared. That Jenkins—the most inveterate liar, the most subtle evader of justice, the most thorough-paced little sneak, who never minded how dirty the work was, so long as its carrying out was adequately rewarded—should raise any question of ethics, was overwhelming. Lethbridge laughed, intensely amused, as he recovered himself. Then with indignant gravity:

"Right? Do you think I would send you, if it weren't? Can't you see, yourself, that it is the only way to punish that spiteful, avaricious old Jonathan Day? Right!" his eyes kindling. "Think of poor Bob turned out of the house, and left to die under a hedge. What better way of paying him out, than to let him return the day after to-morrow, and find his house burned to the ground? But you're afraid——"

"I ain't. You get back—if you were caught outside, there's no knowing how it might get twisted round. I'm off."

He turned and vanished, with swift, stealthy feet, into the darkness of the hedge's shadow. For all his shrinking from positions of violent discomfort and danger, Jenkins was possessed of a curious kind of cunning courage, which the other boys recognised, but could not understand. But, as he never raised a hand to defend himself, they bullied him terribly, or, rather, had done so, till Lethbridge, with his usual pluck and impetuous daring, championed his cause so effectually, that now not a boy in all the large school, ventured to lay a finger on him. In return for this chivalrous defence, there was no act, save one of open defiance or self-assertion, that Jenkins would not do for Lethbridge; and this devotion was genuine affection. Therefore, to-night, he was going on a mission of real peril—though a peril that could be met with caution and cunning—to do the will of his friend.

He had a lonely way and the dark night to face; but the loneliness and darkness he courted, as the chief factors in his safety.

Lethbridge stood at the wicket-gate, straining his eyes through the darkness to see the last of the slender, swift-running figure.

"Poor old Jenkins!" A smile, half-amused, half-contemptuous, crossed Lethbridge's lips. "He'd put his head into

a lion's den, if I paid him well enough for it."

And then he forgot the messenger, in the thought of the mission. Suppose it should fail? He shivered from head to foot, as if with physical cold, and yet he was not even conscious of the long, damp grasses in which he stood, nor of the chill night wind sighing through the plantation in fitful notes of rising and falling. The beautiful boyish face was set, the eyes blazing with the excitement and fiery passion stirring his heart. He owed this hard-hearted, selfish, surly old miser a grudge, and he was paying it. If he had read in his heart of hearts, he might have seen that it was not to avenge "poor Bob," but himself. But, impetuous with strong feelings, he never analysed his actions which followed swift on his roused passions. But even he, who had never known a thrill of fear since he could walk, did not dare linger long. Should he by any chance be missed from his bed that night, what would be known the next day, would give it perhaps a significance he could not explain.

Reluctantly, he turned away, and hurried back to the school-house, out of which he had let himself by a rope from his own private bedroom window. A few moments more, he was back again in his room, the window closed, and no signs to show, that one of the inmates of the sleeping house had been taking a nocturnal walk. It was characteristic of him that when he lay in bed shivering from the cold and exposure, which he felt now in its after-effects, he thought of Jenkins's safety, and wished that he, too, were well out of the peril, back in his bed in that isolated cottage, where he lived but a hard, friendless existence with a relative who took no notice of his comings and goings, save by harshness and grumbling at the cost of his keep. Perhaps, it was a sense of this dreary neglect and grudging, which made Jenkins's home-life so different to his own, wrapped in with the devoted love of a mother, that strengthened Lethbridge's championship of his less fortunate schoolmate.

Oddly enough, for he had not once remembered it, after it had been asked and answered by himself, with that passionate outburst of contempt and reproach, his dreams that night, when he fell at last into a restless, uneasy sleep, were haunted by that question of Jenkins's. All that night through, in his dream-wanderings, it seemed as if he were being urged on by

some unknown, but irresistible will; now climbing slowly, laboriously up some apparently, at first, inaccessible mountain, to reach, at last, the summit, and drink in for one brief moment, the most exquisite delight of life-giving air and glorious scenery, to be forced the next, by the same compelling influence, to descend into valleys desolate and gloomy, and full of dread suggestions. In every place that his feet reached, he found Jenkins waiting for him—standing before him with that pale, anxious face, and that curious, dumb questioning in his eyes, and always asking him that one question:

"Is it right?"

The ever-waiting figure at first met with a kind of contemptuous indifference, at last began to fill him with a kind of nervous dread and expectancy, which, at each recurring appearance, grew, until at last it became a horrible fear and oppression; until every step forward that he took, and from which there was no turning back, because of that unknown, inexorable will forcing him on, became anguish unspeakable, certain as he was, that in that gloomy pass, on that glorious mountain-top, on the banks of that sunlit river, down in that far-off, lonely valley, that figure awaited him, with its eternal question. And the question grew shriller and clearer, till it became like a trumpet-blast, and the agony of its piercing note awoke him at last, and he found himself lying in his bed, bathed in a cold sweat, with the dressing-bell clanging through the house.

At breakfast-time, the school was full of excitement. The postman had brought news of the burning down in the night of old Miser Day's house—a decaying, half-timbered house, situated in a lonely opening of the mountains, about three-quarters of a mile from the margin of the lake.

The fire must have broken out after midnight, when there was no chance of the flames being seen from the distant cottages scattered about the hill-sides, and its dried and rotten timbers, its state of disrepair, had all conducted to make the fire swift and furious. A shepherd early that morning had found it still burning, but past all saving.

In one of the rooms, on the threshold, as if trying to escape, they found the body of the owner, horribly charred and burned, but the face still distinguishable, owing to a mass of wreckage and rafters which had fallen over him, without crushing him. He must have been asleep when the fire

broke out, and only awoke half-suffocated by the heat and smoke, which overpowered him before he reached the staircase.

All the day-boys, as they arrived, were eagerly questioned by the boarders, during the short time before the school opened, about the ghastly details.

Jenkins, who was one of the day-boys, was also surrounded by those who could not get near the arrivals, supposed to be able to give fuller and more authentic accounts of the fire. He told them what he knew, which was nothing more than they had already heard, and he was allowed to go off to the school-room.

In the corridor leading to it, he met Lethbridge. It was a glorious spring morning; through the open window just by them, came the fresh, sweet air, floating across the garden-beds of primroses and violets—Lethbridge, to the day of his death, never had a primrose or a violet in his rooms again—and the sunlight streamed in on the boys' faces, which had grown ashen white as they met each other.

"Is it true?" asked Lethbridge, in a hoarse whisper.

Jenkins nodded. Then, after an effort to force his dry lips to speak:

"He must have come back to the Manor. He was seen yesterday afternoon going towards Broomsmead, where he always took his ticket; and then——"

There was another silence.

"The fellows—they'll be sure to question you," began Lethbridge, and stopped, voice failing him.

"They have; but they haven't found out anything from me. But here they come; don't for Heaven's sake look like that, Leth. We must be careful; and we must stick together now, through thick and thin."

Lethbridge shuddered, and turned away from the pale, eager face, and terrified eyes. What sort of compact was this to be, sealed by the mark of Cain?

CHAPTER II.

IN a luxuriously, though perfectly furnished apartment of his chambers in Piccadilly, sat one of the most promising young men of the day. A man who had, without influence or money, but by splendid talents and capacity for seizing every advantage and opportunity that fate or circumstances brought him, raised himself to an enviable position among other men; a man of whom

political leaders had already taken note, and to whom important overtures had more than once been made. He represented a borough in which his family had been known and respected for generations, and his constituents had the most unbounded faith in his brilliant powers. He was one of the fortunate ones of the earth, for physical advantages were added to mental talents; and at thirty-five, Ralph Lethbridge was as handsome a man as he had been a boy. He excelled in all physical feats, and a certain courteous gentleness of manner, combined with his great strength, made him irresistible. The old frank face of his boyhood still lingered, in spite of years of ambitious toil; and it was perhaps this, as well as his eloquence and genius, which made his influence almost unbounded over those with whom he came in contact.

But this June morning, his face looked old and haggard, his manner depressed. For this morning, he was looking upon a side of his life, totally different to the brilliant aspect presented to the world which admired, coveted, praised, and envied him. This was his own private view, upon which no one ever gazed but himself—and that other man sitting at the table near him.

"What, Jenkins!" Lethbridge sprang to his feet as that other man uttered a short sentence, "turn traitor to my country and party! Better the ruin that threatens me a hundred times!" he explained, with a passionate gesture, which made him, in spite of his added years, so curiously like the boy, who had so righteously denounced Jonathan Day's cruelty, years before. And yet the light that kindled in his eyes was different. It was rather the brilliancy of excited and painful effort. Yet so subtle and gradual had been the change, that had made this difference in the boy and man possible, that he had not perceived it himself, and for the moment, at least, had no idea that it was mere acting—acting splendid, indeed, as it deceived himself—but only acting; for the spirit that had given life to his passionate, eager words as a boy, was dead—slowly done to death through the years that had intervened.

Jenkins watched him, a little anxiously, a little angrily. He had no wish to let his friend's safety and his own fortunes be marred by heroic sentiments of patriotism.

"You must choose one thing or the other," irritably. "Ruin or safety. I can't keep things quiet any longer. The Government would do it quietly. Win-

chester will manage it so, that it will only look like a change of conviction on your part. You politicians change your coats half-a-dozen times, for less reason than you have now," with a laugh, which jarred upon the hearer, so totally free from real enjoyment it was. "It's not the first time he's saved men in the Opposition from ruin by——"

"Infamy!" with intense bitterness.

Jenkins shrugged his shoulders. There was a silence, Lethbridge pacing restlessly up and down the room.

Jenkins sat slowly making dots with his pencil on a piece of blotting-paper, putting them in with the most mathematical regularity, as if he were trying to form some design of which every dot was one of infinite importance. So they were, as each dot represented some proposition suggested by his brain, with its argument for or against, set by it. He looked up at last with a strange, intent look at his friend, who was now standing staring with dark face through the window.

"There are two other ways," he said; "but they are bad—in comparison to your giving your vote to the Government. The first is old Jonathan Day's will."

"Good Heavens, Jenkins!" broke from Lethbridge's white lips. Then he strode over to the table and brought his hand heavily down on it. "What a devil of a tempter you are!" he exclaimed in a fierce whisper.

For a moment he looked as if he could have rent Jenkins to pieces. But Jenkins, who had been his servant for all these years, who had studied every mood, pandered to every passion, stood in every breach made by his friend's recklessness, or folly, or too eager ambition, to his own profit and to Lethbridge's worldly success and fame, read his eyes and analysed their rage. There was something more than mere fury—there was fear, desperation, desire.

"Sit down, Lethbridge, and let us go through the case. When old Jonathan Day died he left a will, in which the whole of his property was to go to a niece's child, a girl. But it was to accumulate for twenty years. At the end of that time, and not before, she was to inherit, as she would then, according to his calculation, be thirty years of age, and, therefore, old enough to understand the value of money. A ridiculous will; for we all know what women are! If she died before that time, the money was to go to the next of kin,

provided he had lived an unstained life. If he had disgraced himself in any way, it was to go to certain charities mentioned. Now, that girl was advertised for, searched for, and during all these years nothing has been heard of her, and the charities aforesaid, knowing you to be the next of kin, have been keeping a close look-out on your conduct. To this day that girl's existence is a myth."

Neither of the men looked at each other, but each was perfectly conscious of the other's face.

"In a month more, this term of twenty years has expired, and if you will, you can enter upon this inheritance, which all these years has been accumulating until it is a fortune, great enough to make you a match for a Duke's daughter."

There was not a single word uncalculated, though the voice that uttered them was low and monotonous—almost indifferent.

"It is almost incredible, the difference this fortune would make in your position. Without it, two months, at the very outside, must see you ruined—your life to-day so full of honour and promise, degraded, blasted, and you yourself hunted down as a felon."

"For Heaven's sake! You will drive me mad!"

That low, monotonous voice, with its suggestions raising an answer from every evil and weakness of his own heart, pierced his brain, like that single note that haunted the brain of the great musician, till he went mad at its sounding.

"There is the other way," raising his eyes now with that same strange, keen gaze as before. "Marry that woman."

"Marry her!" Into the pale misery of Lethbridge's face struggled other feelings—dislike, loathing, anger. A radiant

vision of another woman rose up before him. "I could not! She is old, and you say she is faded, and worn. And she is a common sempstress!"

A dull red flush which had mantled in Jenkins's face at the words of intolerable disgust, faded, leaving him rather pale.

He knew the name of that radiant vision, the Lady Winifred Dacre—a Duke's daughter, who had come out only that season—a lovely little girl, and among whose admirers and lovers, Lethbridge was counted. A favoured one, too, for the girl was flattered by the homage of this brilliant, handsome lover, of whose future, such great things were predicted.

Jenkins had seen her from afar off, for he had never entered the charmed circles opened to his old schoolfellow; and as he thought of her beauty now, he compared her with another woman, whom he had seen only yesterday—a woman thirteen years older, with faded face, and eyes grave from privation and toil, with seamed fingers and shabby gowns. No; decidedly not. It was not likely a man would choose such a woman as this, when that vision, with lovely girl's eyes full of laughter, with rank and power for a setting of her beauty, was shining in his eyes.

"Go away!" said Lethbridge, hoarsely, in a tone with which he might have spoken to a dog. "I can't stand any more of this!"

Jenkins rose, the savage brutality piercing even the armour of self-repression with which he shielded himself; and again the dull red colour, which only showed when he was deeply moved, tinged his cheek. But he did not resent it.

"You're not yourself," he said, quietly. "I'll go now, and leave you to think over it."

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CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

Author of "*Dame Durden*," "*Darby and Joan*,"
"*My Lord Concoit*," etc.

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNCONVENTIONAL LUNCHEON.

I WISH I could describe Mrs. Cray's face as he said those two words; but I could no more do that than I could put down on paper the coaxing, caressing inflection of the voice that spoke them.

The cloud left her brow; the light came back to her eyes.

"You impertinent boy!" she said, and laughed like her old natural self. "Of course I'm cross. See how busy I am, and you come here to interrupt me."

"Oh no!" he said; "to help; I assure you I am most desirous to be of service. But Jane is obdurate; and you—well, you haven't deigned to notice my anxiety to be useful."

"It was so skilfully concealed," said Mrs. Cray, "that I must plead guilty. But if you really wish to do anything, you might move the chairs and tables into their right places in the drawing-room. I engaged a woman to come in to-day and help Jane, but she has not turned up."

"Permit me," he said, gaily, "to supply her place. Half-a-crown and my beer—that's all I ask. Isn't that the regulation fee, Jane?"

"Too much by a sixpence, sir," I said, smiling in spite of myself.

"Dear me!" he said; "how badly we pay women for labour. I had no idea—but then I've never kept house, you see. Well, I'm off to do my duty. You'll say I

deserve the extra sixpence. By-bye, Pauline."

He went off smiling, and humming a little song to himself; and we heard him moving to and fro in the room overhead, and making a great deal of noise, if that was any guarantee of the amount of work he was accomplishing.

I saw mistress was getting restless and fidgety again.

"You'd better go and see to him, ma'am," I suggested. "He won't remember where to place the things, I'm sure."

She looked at the array on the table.

"It's nearly done, isn't it?" she said.

"I think I may leave you to finish, Jane."

"Will Mr. Tresyllion stay to lunch?" I asked. "There's plenty over from supper, you know, ma'am; and I shall have this room all straight by one o'clock."

"I'll ask him," she said, the colour rising in her face again.

She left the room, and the noises upstairs ceased abruptly.

There was very little done to the drawing-room when I went to tell them lunch was ready. And presently they came down, and took their places at the little flower-decked table, as I had often seen them do before; only now there was a constraint—a difference—I could not say exactly what; but the frank, free, careless talk lacked something of its customary ease.

She told him about her new book, and gave him a slight sketch of the plot. And I remember, too, she was accusing him of being very idle.

"You have not written a line since 'Delilah,'" she said. "Are you going to rest on your laurels?"

"I have not gained any yet," he said.

"They are the tribute of genius. Mine is mere talent."

"It is more than that," she said. "You know genius is comprehension, wide and deep, and—intuition. You showed us you possessed the latter long ago. Mere talent would never have inspired 'Delilah.'"

"Do not speak of that," he said, suddenly. "Sometimes, I feel ashamed that I ever wrote it."

"Since when?" she asked, coldly.

Their eyes met in a sort of challenge. In hers there was anger, fear, dread of the answer she had demanded, and yet a determination to have that answer.

Had Mr. Tresyllion spoken the truth, I am sure he would have said, "Since last night." As it was, his eyes sought his plate. "I suppose," he said, "it is because I have learnt the truth of what you said the first time we met. There are women—and women."

"You remember that?" she said, in a quick, breathless way.

"Oh, I think I remember everything you said to me," he answered, frankly. "I have a fatal memory, and that evening was one of my landmarks, Pauline."

She did not answer, nor did she look at him; but the hand that lifted her glass trembled so much that a few red drops fell on the white cloth.

"Poets are not truthful as a rule," he went on reflectively. "It comes very easy to rail at life, and the sin and sham of it all. We paint our morality, and break our hearts, and dream our dreams in verse; but I believe most of us live the lives of ordinary men just the same."

"Do—you?" she said, quickly.

I think she was sorry a moment after that she had asked the question, for he coloured up to the very roots of the fair crisp curls that lay in careless waves above his forehead.

"I?" he said, presently. "Oh, I am no worse—no better. You see I have never had any home ties or interests. I seem to have been always alone as far as sympathy or affection goes. I count myself happy that I possess two friends; a man and a woman. Grant, you know. He is such a splendid fellow. Thorough—as we say."

"And the woman?" she asked, trying to steady her voice and appear indifferent.

"Oh," he said, gently. "Surely you need not ask that. The woman is yourself, Pauline."

She drew a quick, sharp breath.

I thought what a pity it all was. I, looking on, and quite forgotten, could see the game so plainly. The useless pain she was dealing herself, and his unconsciousness of the cause.

It was all so pleasant, so pretty, so harmless to look at, just for all the world like a comedy set on the stage; but I could not help thinking that when the curtain fell, and the lights were out, and the players were alone, there would be very little comedy for one of them.

I went down then and made coffee and brought it up, and they sat on there drinking the coffee and smoking cigarettes in the free-and-easy fashion that Mrs. Cray called "Bohemian."

For my part I saw no harm in it. He was just as respectful and nice as if a dozen people had been there, and I am sure Mrs. Cray was not in the least a "fast" woman. But, doubtless, the society Mrs. Grundy rules would hold up its hands in righteous horror at such goings on as I have described, and say: "Well, a woman who would do that would do anything."

But that is just where society errs.

It is the oddest thing how it blames in one person what it condones in another. How distinctly it has marked the line between the horse stealer and the person who dares only look over the hedge. How it scouts the idea of a woman having "principle," because she is unconventional and looks upon petty forms and regulations as mere words and wind of a false code of propriety.

A woman may be reckless, but not necessarily wicked; she may be eccentric, yet not improper; she may have weaknesses, but not vices; yet all are classed together in a mass by a hard and fast rule, so that it becomes as great a crime to take a little latitude as to be downright wicked.

It is very senseless and very unreasonable. For I am sure that if a woman can be frank, careless, and natural, without fear of being misjudged, she is not only the happier, but the safer for it.

Some women, of course. Their natures vary, just as men's do, or their skin, and eyes, and hair. That is why it is so foolish to say they are all alike and must all be ruled and governed in exactly the same manner. So they are hemmed round with safeguards, at which they laugh, and doctrines which they don't believe, and the result is discontent, and treachery, and sin.

These are some of the ideas I picked up at Mrs. Cray's, for, indeed, her place was what she called it—"a liberal education;" and whether they are right or wrong, I think there is some sense in them, and so I put them down here, though I'm sure some people will think me very audacious for doing it. But I can only say, as an excuse, that all my histories are true ones; and the portraits of men and women are real portraits as I found them, and lived with them, and studied them from my point of view.

It is not the point of view the world ever takes, or their friends take. It may seem coarse and rough; but there it is. I have no skill to fine it down and gloss it over. Some of those of whom I write are dead and gone; others are scattered far and wide in strange lands and distant countries.

Mr. Tresyllion left about four o'clock, and then Mrs. Cray set to work to help me, and we had the house all straight again by six when master came home.

He was in a great state of excitement, and called out for mistress directly he set foot in the hall. She told me afterwards that he had had an offer to go on a sketching tour, for three months, for the proprietors of one of the big illustrated papers. The pay was good, and he liked the idea, but had not decided until he heard what she thought of the matter.

She was very pale, and there was a strange, dreamy, absent look in her eyes. I knew what she was debating within herself. I knew it before even I read one of her "scraps of ideas" which was lying about in the bedroom. It said: "I wonder why the devil always sends a temptation at the very moment we are least capable of resisting it!"

She was always writing down ideas in this fashion, and I was never allowed to tear up any scrap of paper, for fear it might contain one of these valuable records. Old bills, the backs of envelopes, the margins of a newspaper, the cover of a book; each and all of these were utilised for her "ideas." They seemed to come to her at odd times—when she was brushing her hair, or in the midst of dressing for a party, or dusting the china in the drawing-room, or having one of her erratic meals. But I had got used to her now, and thought nothing of it. I suppose geniuses, or artists, or composers must be different to the ordinary run of people. But I do think they ought

to be very careful whom they marry, for they are apt to make a hash of domestic life, and their relative partners require to be very patient and forbearing if they want peace or comfort.

Mr. Cray suggested that his wife should let the house in Bruton Street furnished, and live at their little cottage while he was away; but she didn't seem to like the idea, and so it dropped.

For the next week all was bustle and hurry-scurry. Shopping, and packing, and preparations. One morning Mrs. Cray sent me out for something or other, and I had to go through the Park and passed along the Row where the ladies and gentlemen were riding.

I thought what a pretty sight it was. The bright sunshine sparkling through the trees, the beautiful horses, the pretty women in their neat, perfectly-cut habits. I stood by the rails to look on, when presently I saw a lady stop her horse just a few yards higher up, and stoop down to speak to a young man leaning negligently against the rails. As he lifted his hat, and looked up at the bright, sparkling little face, I recognised them both—Miss Kate and Mr. Tresyllion.

The pretty chestnut she was riding fidgeted and capered about, but his mistress did not seem inclined to cut short her conversation for any sign of impatience on his part.

As I watched them I could not help thinking how happy they looked. Once or twice she laughed; the pretty, heart-whole, ringing laugh I knew so well. Then at last she gave him her hand, and settled herself straight in the saddle, and cantered away down the mile, as pretty and as dainty a figure as ever one would wish to see.

I noticed that Mr. Tresyllion watched her till she was out of sight, and presently he turned round and came walking slowly by where I stood, swinging his cane in an absent sort of fashion, his eyes bent on the ground.

The light and laughter had all gone out of his face. It looked grave, thoughtful, almost sad.

I left the Park and went about my errand; but I had my own thoughts about that meeting, and wondered how often they had seen each other to get so friendly and so intimate as they seemed.

Mr. Tresyllion had not been to Bruton Street for a week; but my mistress had said nothing about it. Perhaps she was

thinking of weeks to come, when she would be by herself, and free to invite whom she pleased, and would be able to make up for these seven days devoted to duty and her husband.

Mr. Cray left on a Saturday, and on the next Sunday evening she had some of her special "chums," as she called them, in to supper. Two or three women whom she really liked, and who all did "something," Mr. Tresyllion and his friend, Archie Grant, and two other men—artists, whose names are not important.

Again, as I watched Mr. Tresyllion, I saw that there certainly was some change about him. He was far graver than usual, and so absent-minded, that sometimes he answered all haphazard, and at others did not even seem to know he was being spoken to. The women chaffed him; the men suggested he was thinking out another "Delilah." Mrs. Cray alone was silent on the subject, being in very brilliant spirits herself, and looking perfectly lovely in an artistic gown of dark-blue velvet and lace. Once, shortly before I left the room, I heard him say:

"Why don't you ask Mrs. Carruthers to one of your Sundays, Pauline? I'm sure she'd like to come."

She flashed a quick, searching look at him.

"Ask Mrs. Carruthers!" she echoed, coldly. "What an idea! I'd as soon think of asking the Queen, or Mrs. Gladstone; they would be just as suitable guests."

"What nonsense!" he said. "She's very clever and very brilliant; and she enjoys artistic society a great deal more than she does fashionable."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Cray, sarcastically. "She seems to have confided her tastes to you on a very short acquaintance."

"Oh," he said, indifferently, "I have met her several times lately—at the Ellertons', and—and other places; and we were talking about people and entertainments, and what a bore they generally are; and I—well, I mentioned your Sundays. That was how the subject came up."

"I am infinitely obliged to you," she said. "But I thought you knew 'my Sundays' are exclusively for the 'working bees' of Society, not the drones or the butterflies. The passport is work of some sort. I have yet to learn that Mrs. Carruthers benefits the world at large in any other way than do most pretty and frivolous women, whom fortune has pro-

vided with ample means and extravagant tastes."

He had tact enough to notice the subject did not please her, and so changed it; but I could see that she was in a very bad temper, and far more sarcastic and cynical than I had ever seen her. The result was that Mr. Tresyllion left much earlier than usual; and that did not improve her state of mind, though I think she was careful not to betray the reason of her anger to him or any one else.

On the whole, the first festivity that inaugurated her "grass widowhood" was somewhat of a failure. She had not expected it to be so; but things rarely turn out as we promise them to ourselves, with that selfish and short-sighted wisdom that seeks its own aims and desires, and expects the force of its own inclinations to control other wills and bind other natures. I felt almost sorry for her that night. I felt sorrier still when I heard her sobbing and crying as if her heart would break, in the deserted dining-room long after her guests had gone.

A GOSSIP ON NAMES.

WHETHER it is to Bacon or to Shakespeare that we must ascribe the responsibility for launching on the world the hackneyed quotation on names, there is a great deal of truth in the remark. People who cry out on an extraordinary name the first time they hear it, soon become so familiar with the sound that they almost resent any one else finding the name at all out of the common.

It is surprising to many to find how large a proportion of English surnames have a plain, every-day meaning, and stand for a thing as well as for a family. But, though a name may sound base or ridiculous on first hearing it, there is so little in a name that, even with mere acquaintances, it scarcely seems incongruous that a man over six feet high should be called Little, and a V.C., Coward.

Most English surnames are taken from counties or towns, from professions or trades, from some personal peculiarity, from the father's Christian name, with Son, Fitz, Mac, Ap, or O' prefixed or affixed; or lastly, from the crest borne by the founder of the family in the Middle Ages.

We have Cornwalls, Cumberlands, Yorkes, and Somersets, from counties; and Wiltons, Barnets, Chichesters, and Henleys,

from towns. Almost every profession and trade is included in the list of names: the town gives us Butcher, Baker, Mason, Sadler, and Draper; the country—Farmer, Shepherd, Fisher, Hunter, and Fowler; and the household—Cook and Butler. To trades, too, must be assigned such names as Potts, Buckle, and Tucker. Personal peculiarities or qualities account for almost as many: there are Long and Short, Rich and Poor, Bigg and Little, Large and Small; while, of names taken from colours, there is a whole chromatic scale—Black, White, Grey, Brown, Pink, Scarlett, and many more.

Then, again, men, whose fathers boasted no surname, and who had no striking personality or peculiarity to mark them out from their fellows, were content to be known as So-and-So's son, and thus founded the families of Richardson, Johnson, Robertson, and Williamson. Not only did this principle obtain among the English peasantry, in feudal times, but even among the Norman families; and so we have Fitzpatrick and Fitzwilliam; while in Scotland there are all the Macs; in Wales, all the Aps; and in Ireland all the O's.

Sometimes the neighbours did not even take the trouble to add Son; they simply pluralised the name, and called the family Clements, Stephens, and Adams. In Wales, this is a very favourite plan, though very often they do not even add the plural, and the stranger to the mountains gets sadly confused between Evan Morgan and Morgan Evans, and between William Thomas and Thomas Williams, and all the other combinations and permutations which can be twisted out of half-a-dozen names.

To mediæval heraldry—though, perhaps, in some few cases to personal peculiarities—must be assigned such names as Wolfe, Hawke, Fox, Crane, Swan, and the like, the owners being called after the cognisances emblazoned on their shields. One of the most luminous instances of the schoolmaster being all abroad, was the derivation laid down by the English and writing-master at a public school of the name Dove. The origin of the name was actually ascribed to an ancestor having kept doves in his back-yard at some time or another!

Royalty and nobility have also given surnames to humbler folk. King, Prince, Duke, Marquis, Earle, and Baron, are all names that may be met with every day; while the lesser nobility and the territorial gentry have furnished such names as

Lord, Knight, and Squire. From the Church, too, come Pope, Bishop, Abbott, Dean, Priest, Pilgrim, Parson, and Clerk, almost every grade in the hierarchy being represented in one form or another.

There is a story told of the ancient Wiltshire family of the Dukes of Lake House which illustrates this peculiar form of surname, and also the pride of the untitled nobility in the superiority of an ancient name over a modern peerage. At the beginning of the century, a brand new Peer cannoned against the Master of Lake House in the hunting-field, and, turning round, cried:

"Do you know whom you're riding over, sir? I'm Lord So-and-so!"

"And I, my lord," replied the old gentleman, with quiet dignity, "am Duke of Lake."

The names of great families are often interwoven into punning mottoes. For example, Lord Vernon's motto is, "*Ver non semper viret*," which may be taken either as a boast or as a statement of fact; and "*Forte scutum salus ducum*," the motto of Lord Fortescue, of which the same may be said. But not only is the family motto often a pun upon the name, but also the crest or coat-of-arms itself. These arms are called canting arms—for example, a doe between three bells, for Dobell; three primroses for Primrose; three "*frases*," or strawberry flowers, for Fraser; and many others. In Jesus College, Cambridge, are to be seen windows filled with the painted cock, which was the crest of Bishop Alcock of that College; and at New College, Oxford, a warden, named Chandler, filled the hall with painted windows representing candles, with the words "*Fiat lux*" underneath them; but he so darkened the hall by so doing, that a wit declared he should have written "*Fiant tenebræ*."

There was a story current at Cambridge, not long ago, to the effect that the Proctor one night discovered an undergraduate on Magdalen Bridge endeavouring, as he thought, to get into bed. The outraged Don demanded the inebriate's name and college, and the latter replied:

"Nott, of Magdalen."

The Proctor repeated his question, and received the same answer.

"I don't want to know what college you are not of," he cried angrily, "but what college you do belong to."

"My good man," replied the undergraduate with intense solemnity, "I have

no other name to give you. Go away, I'm trying to find my bed."

Other people, not content with punning mottoes, and canting arms, have twisted their names into anagrams and metagrams. Peter le Loyer, of Angers, who lived at a time when people had more leisure for such researches than they have at present, found that there was a line of Homer out of which could be formed his name, Peter le Loyer; the place he was born at, Huille; his province, Anjou; and his country, Gaul; three letters were left over, A, X, K, but they show the date, 1620, A.D., when this important discovery should be made. This marvellous prophecy of Homer's should stimulate Mr. Donnelly to unearthing from Shakespeare's Works the prophecy of the discovery of Bacon's cryptogram, which doubtless exists in them. Other persons have had anagrams made for them, among the best word-twistings being Prince Regent, "G.R. in pretence," and Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales; "Her August race is lost. Oh! fatal news."

In addition to the modern sources for surnames, which have been already enumerated, there are the classics. Celebrated names of antiquity are even now borne by everyday Englishmen, and though, at first, the names sound as incongruous as do the high sounding appellations, Themistocles and Pericles, when addressed to ragged loafers in modern Greece, yet we soon get accustomed to them, and see the name Julius Cæsar appearing in the first column of a daily paper without even so much as a smile. Some years ago there was a slight disturbance amongst the undergraduates in the gallery on a Cambridge Degree Day, and an over-zealous Proctor rushed up the stairs to take the names and colleges of the noisy ones. The first man pitched upon gave in answer to the question, Homer, of Cairn. The Proctor got very angry, thinking he was being laughed at, but when the next man gave Pindar of Queen's as his name, the poor Don completely lost his temper, and threatened these classical undergraduates with all the pains and penalties the University can inflict, and was hardly to be appeased by the discovery that Homer and Pindar were so entered on the University Register, and on the books of their colleges. Such great names as Alexander, Regulus, Nero, Cæsar, among the ancients, and Shakespeare, Milton, Addison, Angel, Swift, among more modern celebrities, not to mention a whole

crowd of warriors, poets, authors, artists, and heroes of fiction, may be found in the London Directory, or over shops engaged in the humblest pursuits, and taking not the slightest heed to live up to the reputation of their great namesakes.

MY VALENTINE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"It all happened years ago——"

But, before we get any further, or let the dear old auntie chain our attention so that any of the later links of her story should get lost, here is a picture for you.

It was Valentine's Day. A circle of girls were standing, or sitting, or kneeling about an old, white-haired lady. Each girl had had a Valentine that very morning—some were rubbish, some a matter which to the girl's own heart meant her own priceless treasure.

"You are quizzing us all, Aunt Bridget!" one, her real great-niece, Dina Court, cried.

"Of course—why not?" was the old lady's reply. Her dark brown eyes did laugh.

"Wicked! Cruel!" were two words flung out by a small, brown person, who had no pretence of kith or kin; but who, as all the girls of her acquaintance did, called Miss Bridget O'Hanlon "Auntie." "You would suggest that my gloves are a mystery—they are nothing of the sort!"

"Not Lewis James of Worri——?" the speaker was suddenly cut short. She was a fine girl of nineteen, and made her suggestion in a cool, haughty way. She meant to, and she did, irritate the small, brown person.

"Scarcely." The answer showed how proud a little woman can be. "My brother Jack heard what, it seems, Miss Dina Court heard; but both of you are lamentably mistaken. I suppose you know that Jack sent my gloves!" and Bel Dering rose from the furry rug on which she had been lying and shook herself. Anger, quite as much as vanity, had the ordering of that shaking of ruffled skirts. "I wish Valentines were all at the bottom of the sea! Stupid things!"

Aunt Bridget looked troubled.

"You dearie!" the small girl cried, shaking the old lady's shoulder. "It's not a tragic business yet. I'll give you Jack's gloves, Dina," here she, in her wildness, turned the tables upon the girl

who had irritated her. "Or, perhaps, you'd like them just as well if Lewis James had sent them—you can have them, any way!" She held out a long pair of Swede tan gloves.

"Thanks, awfully. I can tell him of your offer; but I'll not take them."

"Dina! be silent!" The old lady here showed by a stiffening of her very pleasant self, that an unexpected likeness of kinship was possible—nay, real—between her and the haughty Dina. "And keep your foolish words to yourself."

Dina moved not a muscle; but the very stillness of her meant danger. She was not going to hold back from any teasing of Bel Dering. Had not Bel flirted outrageously with the said Lewis James? And what if Jack Dering had filled the gap? Was she, Dina, to be despoiled of any one of her conquests by a chit like Bel?

"Shall I tell you all a story about a Valentine?" Miss O'Hanlon asked.

"I hope it's not a story against them, because I like them; yes," and here Bel shook her brown head funnily, "I even like to get a pair of gloves from Jack. I'll wear them next Sunday!" Which, by-the-bye, she by no means meant to do, having, for some unaccountable reason, packed them away carefully—not for wearing. Clearly, she attached some romance to those gloves.

"Aunt Bridget is awfully sentimental, I know; she scents a tragedy in our squabble, and means to point a moral. That's it!" and here Dina bent from her usual dignity and drew a low chair to her aunt's side.

There was the lifting of the young year in the outer world. Crocuses were raising their delicate heads in the sheltered window box, and above the gray London atmosphere there shone the pure gleam of the strengthening sunlight. But the fire crackled as winter fires do, and the daintily-shod feet of the girls were cosily nestling in the thick fur of the white rug.

"It all happened years ago——"

"True?" was Bel's monosyllable.

"Don't interrupt, dear." But auntie tapped the brown, curly head, by her knee, with a mystical meaning of "Yes."

"Years ago," she repeated, "I was just twenty. I was no longer a chit at school, but a young madam, who thought herself very wise in the world's ways. But now I see what girls are like nowadays I can see what a stride has been made in every sort

of custom as regards the deportment of young people. You say now: 'I will do this, or that; I will go here, or there.' When I was young we spoke little in our parents' presence; we asked permission on every point; I know, too, that we always made a curtsy on entering the room my father and mother sat in.

"Many is the reprimand I have had for the slovenliness, the hurry of my curtsy. Well—I was a harum-scarum chit! But, as I said, I came to be twenty years of age.

"Then, indeed, my life had an event come into it. I got an invitation to go on a visit to an uncle and aunt in Exeter.

"You look scornful, Dina. To go to Exeter in those days was as much as for you last year to go to Switzerland. Nay, far more. The roads were infested with highwaymen; and one must ride in a coach the whole way. A mounted escort would have been a comfortable aid to such a journey; but what could the families of tradesfolk do thinking of such a matter?

"My father was a tradesman. We spoke plain English on that score, then, and thought he was a wealthy man; and I know we had luxuries beyond what many girls of noble birth had; yet, there it was, we were trading folk, and our ways were seemly thereto.

"I do not know whether the inn is now in existence where, on a November afternoon, I, with father and mother to start me, got into the famous 'Quicksilver' coach. Mother, I know, felt it a fearsome matter to send an ignorant maid like me on her travels alone; but I must go alone, or not at all, and in those days I was about as high-spirited and dauntless a young thing as London city held.

"It was our own family coach which took father, mother, myself and my trunks from our house in the Poultry where father traded as a goldsmith; and there the dear thing stood waiting to carry my parents back when I should have rolled off on my travels.

"For a moment I felt a lump in my throat as, through the murky fog, I looked at Cadgett, the coachman, on the box in his many-caped coat.

"I was utterly ashamed of myself; so, with a jerk of my shoulders, I turned my back upon coach, and Jarvie, and all.

"Mother was talking in her gracious, gentle way with a tall, old lady, whose dress was—well! I cannot explain it. It was all black silk, and so much black silk that, in my quizzical mind, I decided she

must have had a husband who belonged to the Company of Mercers.

"But she was my Lady Bellasis, and her maid, a meek, drab-coloured dame of fifty, was standing at her elbow with a pug in her arms and with her lady's reticule in her hand.

"If mother had known who the haughty Duchess was could she have spoken so easily, putting me, the goldsmith's daughter, actually under the care of my Lady Bellasis? Verily, I think dear mother measured the world's greatness more coolly than I. She would not have felt abashed by the fact of having speech with a courtly lady, while I, young ignoramus that I was, really felt timorous when I became enlightened as to the rank of my companion.

"Few travellers were taking the road on that day. Not one other inside passenger came beside us three; but packages were amply sufficient to fill all the space.

"The lady took up her imposed office of guardian very promptly. She was haughty without any manner of doubt; but—you know I have said I was high-spirited and fearless—I was at my ease. She was entirely kind, if she was cool. She began by drawing aside her voluminous black silk mantle. It was richly soft and lined with sable, and as she moved it she made me sit by her.

"I had placed myself opposite to her, and with the maid.

"'You will be better here, child,' she said.

"'But shall I not incommode you, madam?' was my answer.

"'If so, I can endure it. Come.'

"I dared then say no more; but seated myself as I was bidden.

"I do not think any more was said until we were leaving the murky streets behind us. Once or twice I had caught the lady's glance fixed on me, but—do not laugh—I was having a quiet cry in my dim corner, and cared not one jot for the curious eyes of any stranger at all.

"The coach started at four o'clock to the minute; so you will see that we soon had darkness upon us. My new quilted silk pelisse, too, was none too warm, and I suppose I must have shivered with cold or dreariness.

"'You have wraps with you, child; put them on.'

"'Yes,' I said, weakly.

"'You'll be a poor traveller if you do not make yourself as comfortable as you can. Help her, Wilson; tuck that fur cloak

round her feet. A beautiful cloak dear,' she ended cheerily.

"But I had never heard such command as was in the lady's manner to her maid. The woman obeyed, but I knew in a moment that if the mistress was friendly, the maid was the reverse. My eyes took refuge from her sour countenance by glancing at and resting upon the clear-cut, pale, proud features of my new friend. Brown eyes of a calm, and possibly stern sort; grey, frizzed curls set on high round her forehead, with a black velvet band to hold them in their place; a high-bridged nose; all gave her an unmistakeable air of severe pride.

"As I looked, she smiled slightly, and then I became aware that my face had been undergoing a keener scrutiny than hers had from me.

"'You are not like your mother, child.'

"'Oh, but I am!' was my hot answer.

"To be like mother was the desire of each of her girls.

"'The same coloured hair, and the same coloured eyes, but—not the same. Your mother is a lovely woman, a gentlewoman.'

"'And you mean I am not like her because I am not gentle? How could you know? I can be wild, but I have been meek enough here!'

"I knew I was like mother, and at the moment I was angry with this stranger for so putting me down. What could she see of my face in the dim light from those carriage lamps?

"'Yes,' said the lady; and here she put her hand out from the warm furs of her cloak, and laid it on mine.

"Then my hot anger went, and again I felt like crying. I pulled myself together; but, really, I could not get a flippant answer spoken, which at any other time my fiery nature would have had ready.

"Suddenly the even-paced, swift horses were pulled up.

"Where were we? All was dark. Certainly we were out of the town.

"To be exact, we were in amongst the country lanes of Hammersmith.

"Mrs. Wilson gave a scream, then strangled it in half-existence, then sidled down from her seat opposite on to my knees in abject terror.

"'Wilson,' said her mistress, coldly, 'bethink yourself!'

"'Footpads! Highwaymen!' she gasped.

"'In the beat of a watchman!' her mistress said, scornfully silencing her.

"Then the murkiness was lighted by the flare of torches, and I could see a carriage, with steaming horses, by our side, and ill-defined figures. I saw a watchman's box was facing us, and the 'Charley' himself was busying himself with a heavy port-manteau, which was being transferred from the carriage to our coach.

"Three gentlemen were the travellers. One a very old and decrepit, small man—rolled up and huddled in wraps, with even a woman's shawl round his throat and high over his ears—got inside; the others, two rollicking blades of grandsons, mounted aloft.

"Long before the old man was packed in his seat—it was literally packing—the carriage, which had brought the party up, had driven rapidly away.

"So night grew on. Not apace; but wearily and slowly. How cramped I was! How dead tired did I grow! How determinedly did I set myself to keep awake, and on my guard. You see, travelling then was beset with the dangers of an attack. Ay, we city girls were full of tales of how gentlemen, real gentlemen by birth, had taken to the road, and were cutting purses and terrifying women on all the King's highways.

"I wore a loose pocket by mother's good care, and in that were my treasures; but some certain loose cash father had given me for any needs by the way, was in a new purse of sister Pen's netting which was in my reticule. My reticule was on my arm. Was it likely that, even when I felt bowed down with sleep, that I should loose my hold of it? Not likely.

"What the hour was I knew not. Suddenly I woke. I had fought against sleep, but sleep had mastered me; and in the bewilderment of my wakening, I could not take up facts.

"I thought I saw two bright black eyes close to me.

"One movement, and I was quite awake, and remembered all.

"The protecting lady by my side slept; the sharp face of the maid facing her was curiously sharp in its sleep under the yellow gleam of the side-lamp; the bundled-up old man might be asleep or awake. He was a mummy; and the mummy's eyes were closed.

"For one moment I was in terror, under the foolish dream of those keen, black eyes.

"I felt for my reticule. It was safe on my knee, and I tucked it down more tightly between the lady and myself.

"So I awoke her.

"'And I to sleep!' she exclaimed. 'I never sleep travelling!'

"Then she awoke the maid, and bade her strike a match. They had, it seemed, a sensible tinder-box with them; so that, in case of need, they could get themselves a light.

"'See if everything under your charge is safe, Wilson,' the lady said.

"'Yes, my lady.'

"Then I guessed something of the rank of my friend.

"'But, my lady,' the woman said rather sharply, I suppose being wakened from her sleep made her forget her manners, 'the jewels went on Monday, you know, with the Paris boxes, when Sir Jasper and Sparkes went down.'

"'Do as I bid you.'

"The lady held the light carefully, and Wilson made her examination. She rather, nay, more than rather, upset the old gentleman, for he swore a good round oath at her, and shaded his eyes from the light. He lifted his hand for this and his wraps so falling away seemed to show a round, firm wrist, not the withered wrist so old a man might have been expected to have.

"Another oath was mumbled.

"In my terror, for such language frightened me, I glanced up at my lady friend. Lo! her brown eyes were alert and fixed as mine had ignorantly been on the uplifted wrist of the old man.

"'That will do—you can sleep on now.' As she spoke she extinguished the bit of wax candle, and I could feel, but not see, that she was carefully shutting up the tinder-box.

"'There is nothing to be frightened at, child, go to sleep. I shall sleep no more.' Like a mother she set my wraps round me, drew me to her, and I felt that she, too, was guarding my reticule.

"Could she have a suspicion that that old man, such a very old decrepit man he seemed, was not honest?

"I meant to keep awake, and on guard; but—I did not do it. I went to sleep.

"I knew nothing of the relays of horses; I never felt one change that they made. All the night stages passed for me in dreamless sleep, and the things that I next knew was that a cold, grey dawn was breaking. Far away dim hills lifted darkly under the pale sky, vague forms grew into clustering woodland, colourless from the pall of the slowly going night; darker masses suggested houses, one with

lights in windows was close by. Then, from out of the dim sky there came the chime of bells, the hour was struck from the soaring spire of Salisbury Cathedral.

"I was the sole occupant of the coach, and all the rest of the passengers seemed to make a crowd.

"Here, miss—wake!" Wilson was jogging my sleepy self and was cross.

"Then we had breakfast, my Lady Bellasis and I—it was then that I fully learnt her name—and, I was tired, but happy enough. I wondered afterwards at myself, but yet it came quite naturally then that I should be so at my ease with so great a lady. For, in my home, our society was that of City dames, and, as I have said before, in those days tradesfolk did not seek to mingle with the nobility.

"It was still but twilight when we re-entered the coach, for the rapid 'Quick-silver' would brook no tardiness in its passengers.

"I must have been more of a child than I would have liked to own, for I never thought that I must pay for my breakfast. It was the fact of a serving man bringing some silver change to my Lady Bellasis that made me see what I ought to do.

"Before I could speak, however, the dear lady said: 'It is settled. I have had it all put to my score, and you must be my guest for the sake of your mother's lovely face.'

"I did not know what to say. I felt independent, and yet I also had the right instinct that I must not ungraciously refuse what was so graciously offered to me.

"The journey went on.

"I knew not where we were. I looked out as the sun rose, beautifying the most beautiful country of hills and vales, of wood and water, and nestling hamlets. I know now that that most lovely part was the lovely vale of Honiton. How many times since have I seen it!

"Suddenly we heard strange bird cries. What bird was it? I, a Cockney, could not tell. I could not help noticing that Lady Bellasis was struck by the noises. I learnt afterwards that the sound was a signal.

"Very soon after we came to some cross roads, and the two youngsters, who were evidently rollicking men of fashion, ordered the coach to stop, and sprang down from the roof with the agility of cats. They came to the door, opened it in a masterful way, and called out after this fashion:

"Waken sharp, granddad! Here we

are at Poultney's corner. No sign of horse or man. Can you walk? Ay, you'll have to. We are not going to miss to-day's meet. Hurry up; Lascelles has got the valise.'

"A smothered oath was the answer, and with a magnified shiver, the old fellow rolled himself out of the coach and into the arms of the gay fellow who was looking after him.

"Walk!' was the word that followed the oath. 'Do I look like it?'

"Ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha! By Heaven, I don't think you do.'

"The guard banged the door, and we were off.

"Look after them, child,' Lady Bellasis ordered. 'Sharply, too. Your eyes are young; look at the old man most.'

"And what did I see as we swung round a bend of the road? Just this. The old sinner threw up his arms, slipped himself free of his wraps—he looked no more an old man. I saw no more except this—a horseman came tearing out of the road behind and drew rein against the other three.

"He was the bird who had given that strange cry.

"My tongue chattered this as quickly as my eyes saw it.

"What I guessed,' was my lady's cool word. 'Why did I sleep? We have had the pleasure of a ride with robbers; no doubt they knew I was coming this way, they did not know that my valuables were not coming with me, but had gone before.'

"Wilson shrieked, and for two minutes did not heed her mistress's scornful command for silence.

"And I! I did not even tremble. There must have been in me some innate passion for fighting.

"Those were his real eyes that I saw!' I cried. 'But my reticule is safe.'

"Open it, child. Was your purse in it?'

"Yes, my lady.'

"Look for it, then.'

"Can you believe it?—it was gone. How the horrid creature had taken it without my feeling his touch, I never could understand.

"And there I was without a penny.

"The November afternoon was beginning to grow grey when again we stopped. Exeter loomed nigh at hand; the Cathedral towers rose into the wintry sky; but at hand were a carriage and servants, and a tall man—a young man.

"'Jasper!' I heard Lady Bellasis cry. The young man was her son.

"I did feel dreary then—all alone for the rest of my journey.

"As the guard came to close the door, my lady came to me.

"'Poor, penniless child! you shall not go alone. I told your mother I would take care of you, so my son will mount and ride into Exeter with you, and will see that you safely meet your friends. Jasper, come and be introduced to the heroine of the "Quicksilver" coach.'

"I—a heroine! Was that because I had not shrieked when the waiting-woman had done so? My silence was no more than an instinct.

"Now let me hurry on. Again Sir Jasper, helping me out of the coach, called me the 'heroine' of the day; and his speech was to a big, cheery old gentleman, wearing a thick, furred overcoat, voluminous white neck-cloth, and, of course, the curly-brimmed hat of the day's fashion.

"That was my uncle, the doctor. Doctor Blackall, of Exeter, was a great man there, and known for miles around. I do not know how it was done, but Sir Jasper claimed acquaintance with him. Uncle, of course, saw so many people, and in his jolly way he laughed over it when we got home to his fine house in 'Dix's Fields'; but, as he put it, 'more folks know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows,' which was his way of saying that he could not remember of Sir Jasper Bellasis more than the name.

"The matter must explain itself.

"Sir Jasper called on aunt—mother's sister, she was—a few days after, and made himself monstrous agreeable; so that he was made welcome to the house for any day or hour he chose.

"I suppose he took to the young men, my cousins; he was there very often. Nay, all through the winter; for, coming from London, was I not bound to make a long visit? There was no ball of the city, or of the county, to which we went, where we did not find him.

"Girls will talk, you know; so the girls, my cousins, began to twit me with my courtly lover.

"I grew hot, and declared that he was no lover of mine.

"Ay, but he was; and, with the consent of his mother, too, for she had me over to her house at Worricombe, and made much of me for three whole days.

"Many a time have I spent weeks and

months at Worricombe Place since then; but, no visit has even been like that one. Ah, me!

"Can I describe Sir Jasper? No, scarcely. One shrinks from putting one's brightest thoughts into words, one's most heavenly dreams linger radiant in lands of glory unspeakable; so things are. He was a gentleman, he was a nobleman; there! I can say no more.

"Perfect! you say, satirically.

"Ah! no. He was hot-tempered; he was fiery against untruth, disloyalty, or deception.

"On the eve of Valentine's Day we, that is my cousins and I, were at a city ball given for some civic glorifying, and country folks were present as well as the good Exeter townspeople.

"Sir Jasper was there.

"He was my lover, I was sure. I will not tell you why I was sure—even an old woman does not tell these things. I knew that he had to go to London on the following day, for the House would be sitting, and he was a Member for Devon county. I knew that he would see father and mother; I knew, too, that, notwithstanding the calls of the House, or the dangers of the road—by-the-bye, I had forgotten to tell you that very soon after my journey down those three fellow-travellers of mine were pounced upon by the Devon constabulary, and were to be tried for their lives—notwithstanding all such perils Sir Jasper was coming down again in little more than a week.

"On Valentine's morning my two cousins and myself were alert, and as wild as girls could be. The unearthly hour at which we chose to rise!

"Both Deb and Nance had letters, bulky letters, with the addresses in any manner of quaint writing. You know the picture-valentines of laced paper, and satin ribbon, and little angels and cupids. What the girls had were handsome things, very handsome things of the kind.

"Mine was a long, narrow packet. I opened it. Lo! there was a box of French gloves—long grey gloves, and long lemon-colour gloves. Not so much unlike those you girls wear nowadays.

"I was just one huge, burning blush. Of course I knew who had sent them. Had not Sir Jasper talked about my hand; talked nonsense very likely, but—he knew the size of it.

"'You'll wear those grey ones to-morrow night with your pink frock, Bridget,' Nance said.

"'Shall I?'"

"'They'll look lovely.'"

"There was no doubt of that; but I had a feeling that the wearing should be postponed until I could see the giver and thank him.

"'Won't my white ones be clean enough?' I said; and I presently folded up my gloves. I have looked at them many a time since.

"The girls were at once on the 'quiver' to get some like gloves for themselves. They ransacked every Exeter shop, but unsuccessfully. However, they came home radiant.

"They had met Mrs. Wilson, shopping for my lady, and from her had learnt the way of procuring the things. The woman was not sour to them as she was to me. She said she would willingly see about getting them sent from Paris. She had orders to write that very day to Paris for Lady Bellasis.

"Sir Jasper was back. Sir Jasper had been met by uncle strolling under the elms of the Northernhay Walk. They had chatted, and—there was a funny look on uncle's face as he, in his joking way, made as though all his remarks were for my benefit.

"I linger in my story, as if in my old age I could bring back that day, and forget the night that followed it!

"There was a climax to our winter's gaiety that night in the dance the Squire gave at Wavertree Hall in honour of the coming of age of his son. All the world was going; all the world donned their very best ball-dresses. Mine was a new one from London which mother had sent down to me because I had literally worn-out all my stock. It was white satin, and I was white from tip to toe. One thing made me woefully disappointed, for I wished to wear the gloves, the grey gloves, and the thing was quite impossible with my white satin dress. Mother had sent gloves and all—gloves trimmed with swansdown to roll over my elbow.

"Sir Jasper and the Worricombe party were late. He watched me through a whole quadrille before he could speak to me, too.

"When he did speak, I missed something.

"'Was it——' I began hotly to thank him. 'Yes, it was you who sent——'

"But he was talking to the Squire. Funny for him to leave me for the Squire.

"Presently—I thought my opportunity

never would come—I was alone in an alcove, and Sir Jasper, bringing in his partner, had at the same moment to relinquish her to his successor for a new dance. I began again:

"'Do come and speak to me,' I said, braving all shyness. 'I must thank you; I want to thank you very much——'

"Then I saw Sir Jasper was angry.

"'A worthless gift,' at last he said.

"'Worthless! They are lovely!'

"'Too lovely to be worn.'

"'Mother ordered me to wear these with my new dress; if I had had my——'

"'Not too lovely to be given away at the first opportunity!' He was so angry that he never heard what I was saying.

"'Given away?' I gasped. And being hot and proud, I know my back stiffened and my head lifted haughtily.

"'Your cousins——' he could say no more, being here mastered by his jealous fury.

"Then I understood. Deb and Nance did wear gloves exactly like those of my Valentine. I laughed—yes, laughed. But my laugh was not one of pleasure, but of anger as great in my foolish fashion as ever his anger was. Should he—he, my lover, tax me with meanness of that sort? I would not answer such an accusation!

"My cheeks burnt, and I said haughtily, 'If that is your belief, believe it to the end of time!'

"'I was told what I should see, and now I see I must believe'—he was cooling—'I do believe!' A flash of the cooling anger made him add: 'Confess. I do not like to be deceived; but, I dare say you meant nothing so ugly as deception.' He put out his hand as if he would make friends.

"'Then do not tax me with it! You had better go to your informant for more news. I confess nothing—my actions are what I choose them to be! You may believe just whatever you like about me. Go to my cousins! they will tell you how I pressed my worthless gift upon them!' Having delivered my furious self of this tirade, I walked out of the alcove and stood by aunt's side.

"In a moment my hand was claimed for the next dance.

"Sir Jasper disappeared, and I was too angry to care.

"Ah, me! I cared afterwards. Days and days passed and I never saw him.

"The county was astounded in a week or two after by the announcement of the

marriage, by special license, of Sir Jasper Bellasis with a Miss Sylvia Lewis, a banker's daughter, of London.

"Shall I end there, or shall I tell you more? I think I must tell you all.

"I learnt it afterwards, two years afterwards.

"Wilson, the waiting-woman, was attacked by small-pox—that then frightful scourge—and died. Just before her death, she called for her mistress, and Lady Bellasis, with her noble courage, went, believing the woman her faithful servant. Remorse was terrifying Mrs. Wilson; she had gained the ear of Sir Jasper, too kind, too condescending to his mother's old tire-woman, and she it was who, under the guise of a joke, told him of my giving away his gift.

"I do not know how men can believe such stories; they must be weak. A woman would never have listened for one moment.

"A year after, a little daughter was born to Sir Jasper, and the mother died. Sir Jasper had grown wild and reckless, and careless of his wife. Poor girl! I was sorry for her.

"The poor little baby-girl went to Lady Bellasis. When I saw the child she was a year old; for I did, as soon as that, go down to my dear old friend. With her I spent the happiest part of my youth.

"You will think it strange that I, so proud, should go to stay at Worricombe. My pride was dead. All seemed dead to me in those days, but my love and that—poor, neglected young Lady Bellasis—I could own, and did own, and for ever and ever own!

"Sir Jasper went to the wars, and died fighting as a volunteer in the service of a foreign country, just about the time his wife died.

"It was months before the news reached England.

"When Lady Bellasis knew it she sent for me. The dear old lady was loyal to her son's wife; but I knew her mother's love was mine. She showed me Sir Jasper's will—I will not say what he there said of me. It was dated the very day after Wilson's confession, and—well! he asked me to forgive him. He left me his ring—he left me his love.

"My heart would not say that in this he was disloyal—the sin he would most have abhorred—to his wife, my heart could not judge. Poor young thing, too! she was dead.

"Why did he marry at all? Heaven

only knows! Who can ever tell what a wild and reckless man will do?

"I helped to bring up little Lucy Bellasis; she married very young, too young. Her son you know—he is a fine man, the very image of Sir Jasper, his grandfather.

"He is Lewis James.

"Bel, my child," Aunt Bridget's hand fell lovingly on the brown head by her knee, "you'll wear your Valentine gloves next Sunday. He will be here."

Bel did so. And, now that she is Lewis James's wife, she laughingly tells Aunt Bridget that history does not always repeat itself.

THE ROYAL HOUSE OF STUART.

EXHIBITIONS such as that now open at the New Gallery in Regent Street of the "Royal House of Stuart," are among the pleasantest methods by which history is brought home to us; they share with the historical novel and the historical play the gift of making straight the paths of learning. Not that, to be strictly accurate, any of the three can be said so much actually to increase our knowledge of any given period or nationality, as to "fix"—if we may borrow a term from the nomenclature of photography—permanently on the retina of the memory images and recollections which would without them prove short-lived and evanescent. Children are not the only students who prove the apter for the aid of "illustrations," whether those illustrations take the form of plays, of novels, or, as in the case of this Exhibition, of portraits, coins, medals, relics, and the like; for which reason many children of a larger growth will feel their knowledge of the "Royal House of Stuart" confirmed and strengthened by a visit to the New Gallery.

The early history of Scotland is not, we suspect, much studied nowadays in the schoolroom, or elsewhere; but there are many who, in the days when the influence of Walter Scott was potent throughout the land, spent happy and not unprofitable hours over "The Tales of a Grandfather." And in such the Stuart Exhibition will wake from long slumbers many a memory of those childish studies.

Those portraits of the early Stuart Kings—apocryphal, no doubt, for no greater antiquity is claimed for them than the reign of Charles the First, but bearing,

at any rate, a far greater semblance of reality than the absurd collection at Holyrood, which was painted a generation later!—how thickly, as one gazes at them, come the recollections of the earlier monarchs of the ill-starred race as told to children's ears by the great Wizard of the North; the King against whose assassins a woman's arm vainly barred the door; the King who was killed by the bursting of a cannon; the King poniarded by one in priest's garb as he fled from the field of defeat; the King who fell at Flodden; the King who said, "It came with a lass, and it will go with a lass," and died—not the first or the last of his family who did so—of a broken heart. What a heritage of woe seemed the Crown of Scotland when set upon the brow of a Stuart!

By this time we have exchanged the apocryphal for the authentic. The monarch vanquished at Flodden was the brother-in-law of Henry the Eighth; and of the portraits of him here, one lent by the Marquess of Lothian is by Holbein, who represents him of more ascetic an appearance than one has been used to imagine the lover of the Lady Heron of Ford. Already we begin to distinguish, especially in James the Fifth, the aquiline nose, which remained to the end a distinguishing mark of the Stuart family. Of Mary Queen of Scots the portraits are numerous, and there is among them the usual contradiction. There are likenesses of Francis the Second of France, and of Darnley, but of her third husband, Bothwell, there is none, which is to be regretted on artistic, as well as on historical, grounds; for beside the important influence which Bothwell exercised on his times, and especially on the fortunes of Mary, he must have been a man of striking physical attributes; and the absence of his portrait from these walls is therefore doubly to be deplored. Surely it would not have been impossible, among the many collections whose riches were available for the purposes of this Exhibition, to discover the counterfeit presentment of James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell.

We come to a generation later. The Stuart sits on the throne of England; the destinies of his race, for good or ill, are higher, his responsibilities weightier; and as the history of the house takes, with its newly-added dignities, a wider scope, we find the executive of the New Gallery confronted with the question how far the collection shall extend beyond the limits of the

actual Stuart family and those with whom the members of the family intermarried. To admit all who figured in the history of the house would be clearly impossible. That history has become the history of England, if not of Europe; and considerations of space would warn the committee not to attempt a task beyond their powers. On the other hand, to exclude all except the Royal race itself, would have barred many, without whom no collection, commemorating the Stuarts and their cause, would be complete. To admit memorials of their adversaries would, on such an occasion as this, be clearly out of the question; but no record of the time of Charles the First would be complete which took no account of Strafford and Laud, of Juxon and Ashburnham; the "crowning mercy"—though in the Royalist company, in which we here find ourselves, that was an ill-chosen phrase to quote—of Worcester fight, and the Restoration must be illustrated by Mrs. Jane Lane and George Monk, while the story of Charles Edward would be but half told without the portraits and relics of Flora Macdonald, which are among the most interesting objects in the New Gallery.

So far, so good. The task of selection has doubtless been a difficult one, and, on the whole, has been well accomplished; but there are some names which we are surprised to miss from the catalogue. Granting that a mere participation in the general history of the times should not be considered a qualification for admission here, there are many whose personal connection with the fortunes of the Royal house should have secured them a place—supposing, which it is hard to doubt, that portraits of all of them exist—who are nevertheless "conspicuous by their absence."

There could be no difficulty in obtaining the portraits of Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, the historian of one King, the father-in-law of another, and the grandfather of two Queens of the Stuart dynasty; or of Archibald Campbell, Earl of Argyle, one of its most devoted adherents.

The reign of James the Second is but insufficiently illustrated without Father Petre, his Jesuit confessor; and Barillon, the French Ambassador to the Court of Saint James's. But these are portraits which it might not be so easy to obtain.

Again, the rising of 1715 is incompletely set before us, without John Erskine, Earl of Mar, who commanded, at that time, the Scottish force of the Prince, whom the catalogue styles, in true Jacobite fashion,

James the Third and James the Eighth; and we confess a sincere regret for the absence of the Lady Nithisdale, whose successful rescue of her husband from the Tower forms one of the most romantic episodes in annals teeming with romance, and an episode the more attractive for its truth.

Are there no descendants now living of the "Seven Men of Moidart;" of Cameron of Lochiel; of Macleod, and others whose devotion shed a lustre on the last effort of the ill-fated house for its lost crown, who could contribute their ancestors' pictures to render this collection more thoroughly representative of the cause?

It is in no churlish spirit that we note these omissions, which may, in many cases, have been unavoidable; but with the frank admission that so much has been admirably accomplished, that we grudge falling short of absolute perfection.

It is not now our province to examine this interesting collection in detail; but we cannot leave it without referring to two portraits of the last two Princes of the Stuart race by whom any active effort was made to regain the throne of their ancestors.

Let the visitor turn his steps to No. 177, lent by Mr. W. J. Hay, of Duns, representing Prince James Francis Edward (King James the Third and Eighth) as a doughty warrior, clad in complete armour. The blue ribbon falls over his breast, the red folds of his cloak are majestically draped around his figure, the very curls of his ample powdered wig inspire awe; and he rests upon his truncheon with an air that breathes assurance of victory. Does he not appear as absolute an embodiment of command and success as his good cousin and patron, Ludovicus Magnus, of Versailles, himself? What a satire is this presentment on history and hard facts! What a contrast between this conquering hero and the leader, devoid of cheerfulness and vigour, whose inopportune presence in Scotland in 1715 served only to depress and hamper his adherents!

Lest, therefore, this picture should tempt us to dwell on the ludicrous side of the Stuart cause, turn to the small canvas lent by Mr. Blayney R. Townley Balfour, hanging hard by (No. 158), which depicts Prince Charles Edward (Charles the Third) as an old man; and we recognise to the full the terrible pathos of the expiring days of the Jacobite hopes. The Prince, terribly changed from the Bonnie Prince Charlie of the '45, still more changed from the

bright boy whose childish features beam on us from a neighbouring frame, stricken with years, with defeats, and deferred hopes which age men as mere years will never do, bears in his features the indelible marks of dissipation and self-indulgence.

The eyes and brow retain much of the beauty of his youth; but the feeble mouth, with its pendulous, flaccid lips, tell too truly the story of his long and miserable exile. Verily, there is none even among the bitterest enemies of his race, if, indeed, any such now exist, but can afford the sincerest pity for him, who now lies in the great Cathedral of Saint Peter, beneath the tomb raised to his memory by a Prince of the House of Brunswick.

No race of Kings, it is true, had a larger share of human faults and frailties than the House of Stuart; but their history was for nearly five centuries the history of two great nations, which, under their sceptre, became one. They inspired their adherents with a courage and devotion which gibbet and axe were powerless to tame; and their memory will continue green in chronicle, in ballad, and in romance, as long as our language is spoken.

For the sake of uniformity we have adopted, though we are far from endorsing, the orthography of the Committee, and spell the Royal name in the French fashion, "Stuart." The etymology of the word, (which is derived, as everybody knows, from the hereditary office of Great Steward of Scotland, held by Walter Stewart, who by his marriage with Princess Marjory, daughter and heiress of King Robert Bruce, founded the Royal line, and it is said by the seven generations of his family immediately preceding him); the example of Barbour Fordon and others of the old Scottish chroniclers; the universal custom of the Royal house and their subjects for upwards of two hundred years after the foundation of the dynasty, all favour "Stewart" as the correct form of the name. It was not until Mary's residence in Paris, as bride-elect, and afterwards as Queen of Francis the Second, that the French, after their national wont, gallicised the word to suit their own alphabet and accent, in much the same fashion as that in which nearly three centuries later they transformed the patronymic of Napoleon from Buonaparte (the proper Italian form), to Bonaparte, or as the names of our towns appear in such altered guise as "Edimbourg" and Cantorbéry. Orthographical errors of this kind are intelligible, if not

defensible on the part of the foreigner ; but it is certainly strange to find the native endorsing them, and, as in this case, practically banishing the original form of spelling from the language in favour of a corruption of alien source.

BELOW BRIDGE.

IT is well that the Monument stands where it did, although there have been rumours—happily unfounded—that even the Monument was coming down, not of human malice, but by reason of its old constitution, undermined by tunnels and excavations, and shaken by passing trains. But about the Monument, within the last few years, everything is changed ; and yet not everything, for the vista of Fish Street Hill, steeply sloping to the river, still remains as a bit of old London, with the shapely tower and pillars of Saint Magnus, and the clock hanging out like a sign, and a narrow winding contour which suggests the way to old London Bridge—the old bridge with its overhanging houses, and chapels, and gateways, and traitors' heads, perhaps, bristling at the top.

Among the fruit merchants and the fish merchants traffic is in full swing. The lanes are encumbered with carts and waggons loaded, or loading, with cases of oranges, of lemons, of dried fruits, and there is a fragrance in the air of the orange-groves of Spain, mixed with a West Indian pine-apple flavour, dashed with an occasional whiff from the Spice Islands. And then there is a briny, fishy, kippered tornado in Billingsgate, where the approaches are still choked with fish carts and railway waggons, although it is just high noon. But coming out upon Tower Hill everything is quiet and still. The grand old fortress lies there in perfect peace and repose—like an old lion, toothless, and weary with the burden of its years, with battlement over battlement, tower upon tower, roofs and chimneys peering forth, windows and flowers smiling out from ancient prison holds ; and above all these the turrets of the White Tower of old legends and chronicles,

With many a foul and midnight murder fed.

A terrible shaggy old lion is this, before which we pass so unconcernedly ; but one which made the boldest tremble in times gone by.

And here, where we stand on Tower

Hill, how many a curious crowd has gathered to see the end of some great noble or fine gentleman—a crowd heaped together, as one of the last to suffer here said, with a fine scorn : “ Like a lot of rotten oranges.” There is the scaffold, draped with black, and in the midst of it all can we not hear the dull thud of the axe ? It is but the loud clapping-to of the doors of a hansom, by some merchant of the period—or it may be that he is a broker or shipping agent—on his way to the station surrounded with fish baskets and game baskets, and parcels of toys. Is not Christmas at hand, and every one hurrying away from the City—Mercator to his villa in Surrey ; Mercator's head clerk to his dwelling in Camden Town ; and the rest to Islington, or Holloway, or Hammersmith, or where they please ; but no one is coming our way, which is towards Wapping.

It was Dr. Samuel Johnson who, expatiating upon the strange worlds that existed all unknown under people's very noses, advised his friends to go and explore Wapping. They went, but were disappointed ; there was nothing to be seen. The docks had not then come into existence ; but there were tiers of ships in the Pool, lighters and barges loading or unloading cargo, with wherries shooting to and fro, and watermen crowding about the stairs and shouting eagerly for custom. At the present day, when the gray bastions of the Tower are lost sight of, the neighbourhood appears quiet and gloomy enough ; the streets enclosed between high dock walls, and only the rumble of a loaded waggon, and the footsteps of a few chance passengers, to break the silence.

Here is Nightingale Lane, a street without houses, and framed in huge walls, so that its name might have been given it in irony ; but there were pleasant fields and copses here once upon a time, and it is said that Charles the First once killed a stag in this very Nightingale Lane, having followed the poor beast all the way from Wanstead in Essex. But then, no doubt, the neighbourhood was thickly populated ; for hereabouts humble dwellings had sprung up, tenanted by the poorest of refugees and foreigners, who, landing from ships in the river, here settled for want of means to go further. And with these were interspersed a considerable number of people connected more or less closely with ships and sailors. In the midst rose the ancient church and

hospital of Saint Katherine, which had escaped the general wreck of the Reformation. For its sisters were for the most part ladies of gentle blood, and the hospital itself was under the direct patronage of the Crown, the appointment of the Superior of the convent being in the gift of the Queen Consort for the time being—the only piece of patronage she possessed in virtue of her office. In the church were buried many of high degree who had been benefactors to the hospital; and there was a fine altar tomb to the memory of John Holland, Duke of Exeter, Admiral of England, Ireland, and Aquitaine, a grandson of Joan, the Fair Maid of Kent. And thus the place remained with little alteration till the beginning of the present century, when a company was formed to excavate a great dock upon the site.

Hence arose Saint Katherine's Docks, which caused the demolition of a thickly populated quarter with a population of over eleven thousand souls, chiefly of the humblest and poorest, who were driven to seek shelter elsewhere, and spread themselves over the regions of Whitechapel and Stepney. And old Saint Katherine's was also destroyed, but the hospital itself was a gainer, in a worldly sense, anyhow, and removed with its relics, and with some of its tombs, notably that of the Duke of Exeter, to more airy and commodious lodgings by Regent's Park, where it still flourishes. The general account is, that the whole district was laid waste to make room for the docks; but there is one street dovetailed among docks and warehouses, leading out of Nightingale Lane, Burt Street, which bears a cachet of greater antiquity than of the present century, and, perhaps, it was outside the scope of the general demolition.

Here and there opens out a waterway, broad and shining, with swing-bridges and huge lock gates, and beyond is a stretch of placid water where a few steamers are drawn up against the dockside. But within the compass of the dock walls everything is quiet enough. It is like a bit of ancient history to read of the life, and bustle, and movement of the docks when these "home circuit" docks are alluded to. At times, indeed, when Continental steamers arrive and depart from the wharves in the river, or the Irish, or Scotch, or English tourist boats, the place is all alive with cabs and people of all kinds, and of every nationality. And, indeed, there is no lack of business and

movement all along the opened wharves, where lighters hang together in long strings, and cranes and lifts are whirling away merrily. But the fleets of sailing ships, coasters and foreign traders, whose various rigs and colours, with their miscellaneous cargoes, once made these docks so busy and gay; all these, or the greater part of them, anyhow, have ceased to exist. Perhaps a turn of the wheel may, one day, bring back another burst of prosperity to these oldest of London's docks. Other great cities are trying to bring our great modern steamers to their very doors. Manchester, for instance, with its Ship Canal; and there is London's sister and once rival Rouen, which is constantly striving to improve the navigation of the Seine, so as to bring the full tide of commerce to its quays. Or, again, there is the example of Glasgow, with a river far inferior in volume to the Thames at London Bridge, but which berths the great Atlantic steamers at its quays. London, on the other hand, thrusts its docks and harbours as far away as possible, seemingly anxious to create a rival at the mouth of its own river. There are signs, however, that this process has gone far enough, and some day, perhaps, we may be able to walk on board our steamers, just below London Bridge, for America, India, or Australia.

But we are in Wapping now; that last drawbridge across the inlet to London Dock, brought us into Wapping High Street. Time was when all hereabouts was a great wash—a swamp. It was Wapping in the Wose, with a strip of foreshore often covered by the tide, and a watery waste behind, where snipe and aquatic birds resorted in great numbers. The strip of foreshore remains as Wapping High Street, and the inland part was reclaimed by an ingenious device characteristic of the age—Wapping began to spring from the ooze about A.D. 1571—and subsequent centuries. The bank of the river was let out to enterprising settlers in building lots; and it was argued that when these gentry—who were presumably ignorant of the choicer characteristics of the neighbourhood—had built themselves houses, and generally made themselves comfortable, they would be obliged to raise and keep in repair the river-bank, to save themselves and their belongings from destruction. And thus it proved; and much good resulted to the far-seeing lords of the manor.

But there were docks and wharves even then; and famous among the former was Execution Dock, which may have occupied any of these openings that run down to the river, where pirates were hung, the gallows being erected at low-water mark, and the bodies left hanging till three tides had overflowed them.

Some might consider High Street, Wapping, a little dull. It is not altogether what it used to be, when fiddles might be heard in every public-house, and Jack ashore might be seen dancing a hornpipe in the inn-parlour, or going through a reel with Moll or Sue in the fairway. There are public-houses still, but there are more soldiers than sailors to be found within. Tom Atkins of the Coldstreams and Bill Fuse of the Artillery are enjoying their moments of liberty after their morning parade in the Tower, and squaring their elbows as they bring the mantling cups to their lips with a flourish, as if in salute from Mars to Bacchus. Longshore men, too, are lounging in the bar, and stray watermen grumbling about the hard times. Such shops as there are along the way are devoted to ships'-chandlers and butchers, also of the nautical persuasion. And here you may see a stout and rosy west-country captain, whose steamer lies at the wharf hard by, who is making provision for his Christmas dinner, which he will eat somewhere off the Longship rocks as he beats round the Cape of Storms for Cardiff.

The river side of Wapping High Street is lined with tall warehouses mostly, through the doors of which can be seen a patch of bright water, with black and red funnels rising above the landing-stage, and a glimpse of the opposite shore, with dark, ragged buildings beyond. But a sense of the pathetic comes across the mind as a painted board appears over a narrow entry, with the inscription, faded with wind and weather, "Wapping Old Stairs." And down this narrow entry let us go, past the snug corner public-house, where more soldiers and more longshore men are dimly outlined through frosted glass, and along the narrow, paved causeway, which ends in a little landing-place, from which a steep flight of stone steps leads down, not to the water just now—for the tide is down, down to the very bottom of Father Thames's fluvial boots—but to the gravelled bed of the mighty stream sprinkled with all kinds of flotsam and jetsam. A great red funnel looms out of the water in front, and boats

and barges lie aground on each side. And these are "Wapping Old Stairs."

Where the pathos comes in, it is not easy to see; and yet it does somehow come in. Is it with Molly, who had been so faithful and true

Since last time we parted at Wapping Old Stairs, or is it that this quiet, almost solemn nook—for thus it appears at the moment—represents all the vanished scenes, romantic, melodramatic, or what you will; but any how, our ideal of the old, seafaring life, from the days of Drake and Frobisher to those of "Nelson of the Nile," or even down to old Charley Napier's time, as he sailed with the gale among his stout three-deckers for the Baltic? Here came Jack ashore, cautiously perhaps, for there might be a press-gang lurking round the corner, or uproariously otherwise, with his prize money in his pocket, and welcomed by all the lasses; and hence he took boat for his ship—His Majesty's frigate "Arethusa," that had taken her guns and stores on board, and was expected to drop down with the tide.

Looking over the scene is a projecting bay window from the adjoining tavern, with the backs of chairs visible as if arranged for a harmonic meeting. And what an ideal meeting might be held in such a locale, say some moonlight night when the tide is gently lapping against the stairs, with Charles Dibdin in the chair, and Incedon as chief performer, and so we might hear again the sweet refrain of "Wapping Old Stairs" and "Tom Bowling."

And with Wapping Old Stairs we have Wapping old church on the other side of the way, very quiet and old-fashioned, where pig-tailed Admirals and half-pay Lieutenants of Roderick Random's time may have worshipped. And here they may lie buried, in this green little nook, with the grey weather-worn headstones; a nook which must be pleasant enough in the summer time when there are leaves upon the bushes that scramble over the tomb. Boys and girls, too, make the walls echo with cheerful shouts, and over the school-house porch a couple of quaint figures, male and female, like those of a Dutch weather-glass, give signs of some beneficent endowment of old times.

Judged by the length of its High Street, Wapping should be a mighty place. It is not so really, for it is so elbowed on one side by the docks, and shut in on the other by the river, that it might be mathematically

defined as length without breadth. And yet there is something about Wapping that clings to human affections. There are old people who were born there, and who have hardly ever been out of it, and look upon Fleet Street and the Strand quite as foreign parts. And to be a butcher in Wapping is almost equal to being a baronet of the United Kingdom out of it, and there are not many true sons of Wapping who would choose the one position before the other, and it is possible to imagine that, after passing long years abroad, somebody's thoughts might turn fondly to a certain corner public-house. That was the case, anyhow, with a certain young man, who afterwards became connected with a famous peerage case; for this young fellow, who had been among the sailors of Wapping when a boy, and afterwards kidnapped and sent off to the plantations, turned out to be the heir to the earldom of Anglesey, and yet loved better than anything else the snug parlour of the "Yorkshire Grey," at Wapping. And a great advantage that Wapping High Street has over most other High Streets is, that when you are tired of walking—and it is possible to get very tired of the sloppy pavement and granite sets of that endless street—and there are no omnibuses or cabs to be met with, still you can take a boat.

Even now, a hail from Wapping Old, or Wapping New Stairs for "first pair of oars" might bring some serviceable wherry and a couple of grizzled watermen to the scene. But the steamboat pier is handier, and this year the boats are running all the winter through, weather permitting. And bright and brisk is the river, the tide coming freshly in, and floating argosies coming along at full pelt. Here the jolly little trading brigs trimming their gallant sails to the breeze; there the floating haystacks, with red sails flapping above and bellying to the wind. Big steamers come snorting along, and tugs with long strings of barges and lighters; wind and water and dashes of moist sea-drift, and gleams of sunshine from the cloudy sky, all give life and freshness to the scene, while a wreck-berge, with a green flag fluttering, gives a reminder of the voyage's perils; and there is Greenwich Hospital shining out over the rough and foaming tide. But our voyage ends at Limehouse, and here are more docks sprinkled with shipping, and a curious tumbledown quarter, half nautical and half slummy.

But the brightness of Limehouse is concentrated in a queer little winding street called Three Colts Street, where the shops are as gay as they can be made, the butchers with their pieces, and the drapers flaunting all kinds of bright-coloured things, and the general shop all aglow with penny toys and brilliant knick-knacks. A little hop-o'-my-thumb in a scarlet cap makes more noise than anybody, "Here, come along, who'll buy! here you are, the cheapest in the 'ole world." And so the fair goes on, while slatternly women, with greasy shawls over their heads, cheapen the joints, and bold sailors' lasses stare out from under their fringes of thick brown hair. And from all this bustle it is not a step to the quiet of Limehouse Churchyard, all open now, with seats, and shrubs, and solemn tombs among the grass plots. And beyond that are the trams rolling away towards the City through all the traffic and the bustle of the Commercial Road.

A MAN'S FRIENDS.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

By B. DEMPSTER.

Author of "Mrs. Silas B. Bunthorp," "No," etc. etc.

PART I.

CHAPTER III.

THAT same afternoon, at an unusually early hour for Jenkins, who lived only for work, he left his chambers in Lincoln's Inn, where he practised as a solicitor, and hailing a hansom, gave the address of a street in the East End.

Lawyers' business takes them to strange spots; but it could hardly have taken any one to a less inviting place, this hot afternoon, than Bolton's Rents. It was a dark, narrow alley, leading out of a great thoroughfare, and opening at the other end into a small flagged court, shut in on all sides, except by that narrow opening, by tall, dilapidated houses. The air was stifling and sickly with that indescribable odour which rises from places inhabited for generations by poverty-stricken humanity. It was full of the shrill cries of the children, who swarmed in every doorway, and played those pitiful fragments of games, handed down from a distant past of happier and healthier things, to these little waifs of a great city's gutters.

Picking his way through the ragged, sharp-eyed, old-faced babies, the lawyer

reached a house, the door of which, after the fashion of the other houses that hot afternoon, stood wide open. He entered and mounted the dirty, broken stairs. The paper on the walls was black with smoke and dirt, torn off here and there, exposing lath and plaster which, themselves, in many places had suffered from the wear and tear of the rough, overcrowded, order-indifferent life, passing ceaselessly up and down the stairs.

But when he reached the last flight of all—leading to the garret—matters improved. This flight was scrubbed scrupulously clean. The walls had been patched with strange and varied papers. There were even one or two highly-coloured prints of painful perspective, adorning the wall which faced one of the doors opening on the tiny landing. The lawyer stopped for a moment to gaze, with solemn interest, at the most astounding of them all. It was a problem, which not even his subtle wit could solve, how any persons with sane reason, could invest their money in such a production. This picture, however, covered a large, unsightly blotch in the wall, so it had its uses.

The sound of a woman's voice, breaking into a snatch of song beyond the door behind him, made him turn as if faintly startled. He listened for a second, then knocked at the door. It was opened immediately. He knew, having been there once or twice before, that if the visitor were the Queen herself, the room would be ready to receive her. A tall, slender woman in the doorway, smiled him a pleased greeting.

It was a tiny little room, and the tall lawyer had to bend his head as he crossed the threshold. Up here, near the roof, the heat was more intense; but it had this advantage, that through the little dormer window, the blue sky could be seen, and the shrill voices of the children were softened by the distance. The room was exquisitely clean; the walls, a very patch-work of odds and ends of paper, which hid, as on the staircase, ugly tears and holes, while the same kind of pictorial decorations adorned them. There was scarcely any furniture: a bed, consisting of a mattress, neatly covered in the daytime with a coloured quilt; a small deal table, on which stood at the present moment a cup and teapot, with a loaf and a little pot of treacle. There was a chair, by which lay the work she had just laid down, and by which she earned that daily bread. A

small cupboard faced the door. There were only two signs that betrayed anything but the barest necessity. One was a bowl of lovely roses set on the table, and the other the spirit-lamp with which she had just made her tea.

"You see," she said, with a bright smile, as her visitor took the chair, "I make good use of your kind present. And the roses you sent this morning—oh, the roses!"

"I am glad you liked them; they are just blooming themselves to death in the garden," he said, wondering if she would have had any tea at all this afternoon but for his gift of the lamp, which he had accompanied by a store of spirits enough to last for months.

He rather thought not, as the last time he had come, he had found her drinking water, apparently because there was no fire to boil the kettle. She brought out another cup from the cupboard.

"May I give you some tea?" she said, in the sweet self-possessed tone of a well-bred woman, and which was one of the things that always astonished him so in her, for she must have been still a child, when circumstances cast her adrift from the society to which by birth she belonged, and left her to earn her own bread with the working classes. "But," she added, with a shadow of dismayed regret, "I have no butter; and—perhaps you don't like treacle?"

Jenkins hastily glanced at the pot, repressing a shudder. He had never tasted treacle since he was a boy, and felt he was now too old to begin again. But he took the tea with a curious feeling, which might almost have been pleasure, that he could accept this hospitality from her. There was no other chair, so she sat down on a box near the window to drink hers.

"I saw Maria, yesterday," she said, flushing, as she always did when moved by any feeling, "and she told me how good you—"

"Oh, please, Miss Day, don't mention it. You see, I always feel that I was the cause of her accident."

A fortnight before, when driving in a hansom, the horse had bolted, and knocked down one of the two girls, crossing the road at the time. The girl, who was very badly hurt, was a friend of this Phemie Day's, and shared her room. As Jenkins jumped out from the wreckage of the cab, which was smashed to pieces a few

yards further down the road, he recognised, bending over the senseless figure in the road, the woman of whose existence he had become aware a week previously. She, of course, knew nothing of him, nor of how he had been watching her during the last week, and only was intensely grateful for his kindness then, and since, to her poor little friend, now lying in the hospital.

Quite a friendly acquaintanceship had risen between them; and partly through this, and partly through his argument that it would add to her sick friend's future comfort, when she would be well enough to come home, Phemie had accepted his present of the means for making the tea, which was her only luxury.

They sat now talking a little of Maria, and of her anxiety to get home again, to help to earn the daily bread, and pay the rent; and then on to the labour these latter facts entailed. He looked at this woman as she sat there in a graceful, though rather weary attitude, the warm sunlight bringing out tints he had never noticed in her hair before, and shining in her eyes; and he saw how shapely were her arms and bust, how beautiful the lines of her throat and head. With good food and sufficient, with rest and freedom from anxiety, the contour would fill out, the flesh grow white and firm; the lips, too hard and set now, grow softer, as the smiles came oftener. It was an anomaly that struck and stirred even him—who was to benefit so largely by it—that this woman, heiress to thousands, should not have sufficient to eat. His eyes glanced restlessly away from hers to the wall before him; but Daniel, with a red face, glowering at him from a group of in-offensive, but copper-coloured lions, made him wince.

"You don't like those pictures," she said hastily; "but Maria likes them. They belonged to her father; and I cannot hurt her feelings by saying that I don't."

"You don't like them then?" with relief, and then forgetting the impertinence of the question in his anxiety to know why she was so different to her surroundings, "why don't you like them?"

She flushed warmly and then laughed.

"Perhaps—because I have been taught differently."

"You would have disliked them without lessons," he said, abruptly; "you could not like anything that was crude, and ugly, and common."

She did not answer his remark; but it

seemed to have pained her in some way, for her brows contracted, and her mouth grew hard.

"Would not you like to be rich?" he asked, obeying an impulse for the first time for years.

"Rich!" The colour mantled to her face, and her eyes grew bright and eager. "Oh, yes; I would love to be rich. Life must be so beautiful to the rich!"

"They don't always think so," drily, a most unreasonable disappointment stirring him. Unreasonable, because the getting rich had been the sole creed by which he guided his own life. And then he was suddenly ashamed, for he saw that her eyes had softened with unshed tears, and he, sceptic as he was, felt certain that it was not for herself that she wished to be rich. "It would be so good for—Maria," he said thoughtfully.

"Oh, yes—for Maria, and for others," with a wistful, far-off look in her eyes. "And for me, too—I should like to be rich." And then she glanced at the work on the floor. He understood that he must not keep her idle any longer. He rose and shook hands. "Thank you for coming," she said simply. But her eyes said a great deal more, and he went away curiously satisfied.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE weeks went by, filled with the usual routine of the season's gaieties and Parliamentary business. Lethbridge combined both, with the marvellous capacity for enjoying himself, and working hard, which his splendid strength, mental and physical, gave him. But men began to say that he was knocking himself up. His face was looking thin and haggard. He was not himself in the House, and in society he seemed to be growing absent-minded. His friends remonstrated, and the Duke of Castleton meeting him one night at a large reception, advised him strongly, as if he felt a personal interest in the matter, to take a long rest when Parliament closed. His daughter also, that same evening, took him to task. The Lady Winifred Dacre was looking even lovelier than usual, and with the fires of love, despair, fear, raging in his heart, Lethbridge had lingered as near to her as he could. He followed her from this reception to a ball, at which she had promised to give him two dances, and it was only to have these that he went. It was at the ball that she spoke.

"What is the matter with you, Mr. Lethbridge?" she asked, with a pout. "You have scarcely spoken a dozen words to me all through these two waltzes. Are you ill?"

"Would you care very much if I were?" he asked, eagerly.

"I should care," she said with a laugh, but paling a little. "You must not get ill. What would our side do without you?"

"I'm not thinking of that!" with bitter impatience, for her loveliness, and the thought of how soon it would pass out of his reach, maddened him. "Do not coquette with me. Would you be sorry, if I broke down and failed?"

"I should be very sorry," she said, keeping her eyes on the feather-fan with which she was toying. "Because if you failed to become famous, you and I would never be allowed—able to meet again."

He understood perfectly. If he succeeded he might be allowed to win her— She loved him already, he saw that. But if he failed to fulfil the promises formed for him, she was lost to him for ever; and then as if it were not enough to be banished from her presence, there was the public dishonour—the days were so rapidly bringing him. This would kill her love. He would not even have that remembrance to take into the exile of death. For he had made up his mind that he would not face the disgrace of the exposure. He would die first. And only those papers stood between him and life!

"I will not fail," he exclaimed, with fierce passion. "I will sell my soul rather to win you." Then, as he saw how he had frightened her, he added gently, with a strange smile, "men have to do hard battles sometimes, for the women they love. Luckily, the women sit too far off to hear the blows."

Lethbridge paced out the rest of that night in his own room; and with the dawn he had come to a decision. He was engaged that morning to a Parliamentary breakfast, and, afterwards, until luncheon, was occupied with some of his constituents. As soon as he was free, he drove to Jenkins's chambers. But when he arrived there, a clerk told him that he had not been there all day, and was not expected. Unless he were at his house on the river, none of the clerks could say where Mr. Lethbridge could find him.

Cursing the strangeness of his ill-luck—for he had never known Jenkins to be

absent before, without at least leaving word where, in case of great emergency, he could be found—Lethbridge left the office.

Possessed now with an overmastering desire to carry that decision of the morning into effect, he took the train for the house on the river which Jenkins had rented for the summer, on the chance of finding him there. He had to drive some little distance from Taplow station after he reached there, and thus it was growing rather late in the afternoon, when the carriage stopped at the gate leading to the house. Telling the driver to wait there for him, as he would only be delayed a few moments, he left the carriage at the gate, and walked up the path to the house. The front door stood open as he reached it. Jenkins's housekeeper, a pleasant-looking elderly woman, came out of a room near.

Yes, her master was there, she said in answer to an enquiry of Lethbridge's. He was in the garden; she would tell him.

A passage ran from the front door through the house, to another door opening on the garden, which sloped down to the river. This farther door, framed in roses, stood wide open, too, and, through it, Lethbridge caught a glimpse of sunlit sward. He did not know what possessed him, unless it were that feverish, desperate desire to hasten the end; but instead of staying in the room to which the housekeeper led him, he followed her down to that farther, rose-framed door. There was a sound of voices, and of a laugh, which he recognised, and yet did not recognise. But it took him suddenly back to his far-off schoolboy days. Jenkins used to laugh like that when, in boyish, unthinking happiness, he and Lethbridge amused themselves together.

When he reached the doorway, he was roused for a moment from his own terrible preoccupation. The scene he saw was so totally different from anything he expected from Jenkins. A tea-table was set under a tree on the lawn, and about it were two or three comfortable chairs. A pale, fragile girl, looking as if she had just risen from a dangerous illness, leant back in one, smiling happily. Near her was a stout, matronly-looking woman, showing by her bonnet painful attempts at adorning herself for the occasion. She sat on the edge of her chair, poised her saucerful of tea on the tips of her fingers, while her cup stood on the grass at her feet. Her red, coarse, but honest face showed her anxiously

evident to appear at ease, and her hands looked as if charring were her daily occupation. At the tea-table was another girl. For she looked but a girl this afternoon. A long day in the sunny, rose-scented air had browned and tinted her cheeks and lips, and intense enjoyment had given back youth to her eyes. She was pouring out the tea, while Jenkins stood by her side, waiting to carry it to his strange guests. All three women were poorly, and, with the exception of the elderly one, simply clad. They looked like workwomen, except that the one at the table had something indescribably refined in her face and carriage.

In an unconscious way, Lethbridge took in the whole scene, and then his own intolerable personal excitement obliterated everything.

Jenkins, too absorbed in watching the face uplifted laughing to his, did not notice his housekeeper's approach till she spoke. Then he looked up and saw beyond, in the doorway, Lethbridge.

Every drop of blood left his face, till it became ashen grey. He set down the cup hastily on the table, and made a step or two forward. Then he stopped, and turned back to his guests.

"I must leave you for a little. Mrs. Gale will see that——" Then he turned away as if he had forgotten to finish his sentence, and went forward to join Lethbridge.

Neither of the men spoke a word in greeting, and Jenkins, leading the way into a small room near, closed and locked the door, then turned and faced Lethbridge.

"You have come——"

"Yea." Lethbridge made a hasty gesture to prevent Jenkins saying aloud what he had come for. "I have decided. I could face ruin, but not dishonour. And there is no other way. We must not lose any time, either. The shareholders are—— Jenkins, you know what must be done to save me!"

Jenkins nodded.

"And I say, Jenkins," in feverish eagerness, with a strange, hoarse laugh, "you shan't lose by it. We have stuck together ever since that——"

"Compact we made after murdering——"

"Curse you, Jenkins!" with a shuddering look about him. "What the devil do you mean by speaking like that?"

"I don't know. It was the thought of destroying those papers, perhaps. The money was his, and——"

He stopped. He was going to say, the woman who should have inherited, and to whom they were about to do this irreparable wrong, was there—close—in his garden. But somehow, he could not speak of her to—this man.

"Curse you!" said Lethbridge, fiercely, again. "Why do you call it such an ugly name? We did not know he was there. But there, I can't stay any longer; I'll leave it to you to do when you like—when it is safest. I can trust you; you've never failed me yet."

Then he hurried off, to take up once more the busy, ambitious, honoured life, which had been his since his schooldays till now, leaving Jenkins once more, too, to the underground work, which he had done from the old schooldays till now. It was Jenkins who had helped and saved him, over and over again, from the results of his wild extravagances, his fastidious tastes, his ambitious aims, to which his own modest patrimony had helped so little. By trickery, corruption, bribery, Jenkins had worked in Lethbridge's cause, while Lethbridge sailed fair before the wind of public approval, Jenkins being perfectly willing to run the risk of infamy for the chance of wealth; and Lethbridge had always dealt fairly by him, paying him well for his work, as he had done when Jenkins fagged for him at school.

Lethbridge would profit enormously by the destruction of these papers, of whose existence no one knew save they two; for the person from whose hands, by a strange accident, they had passed into Jenkins's keeping, was dead; and Jenkins himself would benefit largely. It would be sufficient to set him up above the necessity of business. This was a great consideration, for Jenkins's mode of practice was beginning to excite suspicion among his brothers of the robe; and one or two had begun to look rather coldly on him. He was quite young yet; little over thirty. It would be a serious thing to lose his business so early in life. One or two recent sharp transactions of his would, if known, be sufficient to get him struck off the rolls. It would be a wise thing to feather his nest now, so that, in case of emergency, he could retire to it.

He stood motionless for some moments in the creeper-shadowed parlour, from which all the sunlight had withdrawn. Then he went out again to his guests.

He was glad to get out into the hot sun-

shine again, for he seemed to have grown cold in the shadows of the room, from which the weatering sun was cut off. They had apparently been very happy in his absence. He had a strong suspicion that two at least had enjoyed themselves much more when freed from the restraint of his presence.

For Mrs. Jones was leaning back, talking volubly, interspersing her words with loud laughs, which ceased suddenly, with a swift upright movement back to the edge of her chair, at his reappearance; while Maria, who had relapsed into the more convenient, if less elegant fashion, of drinking hot tea from a saucer, hastily poured it back into her cup, and tried to look as if she had still been taking it after the fashion of Mr. Jenkins and Phemie Day herself. But the latter looked unfeignedly pleased to see him back. Her quick eyes, too, had discovered something that the others had not noticed. She had seen the blanching of his face, and had feared that the messenger in the doorway had brought bad news.

She looked up at him now, but though still a little pale, he gave no other signs of trouble, and, as he said nothing, she did not like to ask. But her unspoken sympathy expressed itself in her voice and eyes; for he had been so good to them, that she could not bear to see him in trouble.

Maria had left the hospital two days previously, and Jenkins had suggested that a day in the country would do her good, and persuaded Phemie Day to give up her work for a few brief hours and bring her down to his house on the river. To make it pleasanter for them, he had asked them to invite the woman who shared the other garret on that top landing, and who—honest and respectable—had been kind in many ways to them. The three lived up there, keeping themselves aloof from the rest of the inhabi-

tants of the house—not always too respectable.

They had enjoyed their day very much, and in different ways expressed their thanks, when the fly, ordered by Jenkins for them, arrived to take them back to the station.

Maria thanked him shyly, though the pretty effect of her blushing face was rather spoilt by a nervous giggle.

Phemie let her hand rest in his—for he seemed to have forgotten that he was holding it—and only said "Thank you," but her eyes shone like two stars, and her lips were as soft as he had dreamed that they might be that afternoon, three weeks before, in her garret.

Mrs. Jones dropped him a curtsy, and when he, with an effort at equality which did him credit, seeing how totally unaccustomed he was to ladies of her position and occupation, held out his hand, she touched it for a moment with her own coarse, hard palm, and then dropped it as if it had burned her. But she made a speech.

As Jenkins politely assisted her into the fly after the others, she glanced with what she meant to be an arch and meaning look at Phemie.

"Lor, sir, you've been most kind; quite the gentleman. We'll never forget that beautiful chicken, and puddens, an' things. But me and Maria knows who we've got to thank for it. You wouldn't a done it to sich as we, if it hadn't a bin for Phemie. Any one can see with 'arf an eye——"

At a word from Jenkins, the driver touched up his horse, and the end of Mrs. Jones's speech was scattered in the air, as she was jerked back in her seat. He did not know why he had given the sign. Perhaps for Phemie's sake.

For the last he saw of her, was with the crimson of outraged delicacy staining brow and throat, while her beautiful, steady eyes had fallen, in shocked and troubled shame, to his roses, which she held in her hands.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Consett," etc.*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next day a letter came for me from Miss Kate, asking me to go and see her and the children if Mrs. Cray could spare me.

The note said: "Come about five p.m. They always have tea with me in my boudoir, and you will see them to great advantage."

Mrs. Cray gave me leave; and so, about half-past four, I started off for the house in Manchester Square which they had taken for the season. Miss Kate had given orders that I should be shown up to her room, and there I found her with the children. One was sitting on her knee looking at a picture-book, the other standing by the window craning his pretty fair head to see over the flower-boxes into the street below.

She jumped up and welcomed me warmly. "Here, boys," she called out, "this is my old nurse who used to take care of me when I was a little girl. Come and shake hands with her."

I thought how pretty she looked standing there with those handsome little fellows. She had on a loose, soft tea-gown of some deep gold stuff, and a great bunch of crimson roses at her waist. The youngest boy was dark, and very like her; the eldest had a grave, fair face, and calm, steady, grey eyes.

They were not the least shy or abashed, but did just as she told them, and soon began to chat away with me in most friendly fashion.

Miss Kate gave me some tea, and made me tell her all that had happened since I left Dayrell Court.

She was very indignant when she heard the way Tom had behaved, and how he had gone off and left me quite destitute.

I suppose I had been there about half-an-hour, when suddenly Master Jack, the eldest boy, began to tap at the window and make signals, and seemed in a great state of excitement.

"Oh, mother!" he cried, "there's Rex down there in the street, and he's looking up. Do let me run down and ask him in!"

"My dear," said Miss Kate, "he was here only two days ago. He can't possibly want to see you again."

"Well, I want to see him," said the boy, and he dashed out of the room and down the stairs for all the world like a whirlwind. His mother rose and rang the bell.

"I had better have some fresh tea," she said, and then she came back to the table and stood looking down at it with a little soft, happy smile, as if at some pleasing memory.

I imagined that Master Jack had gone off after some young friend, and was bringing him back. I was therefore not a little surprised when, with much laughter and shouting, he dashed into the room with Rex Tresyllion.

"Captured again!" he said, laughing. "Mrs. Carruthers, I shall have to give your square a wide berth if this young brigand is always on the watch for me. It's next to impossible to pass the house without an onslaught; and, really, sooner than make a scene in this extremely proper neighbourhood, I have to give in to his demands."

They certainly said he was welcome,

and I suppose the assurance satisfied him, for he rattled on with a whole string of nonsense to the children in a merry, boyish fashion, as different as possible from the "company manners" I had seen at Mrs. Cray's evenings.

"Now, Jack, preserve the sanctity of my pockets!" he said at last. "The fairies have not been at work to-day. Here, Reggie, come and give me a kiss; what are you holding on to your mother's gown for? That is quite a baby trick."

He threw himself into one of the low easy-chairs scattered about, and the little fellow leaped on his knee and kissed him with right good will.

"What you brought me, Rex?" he lisped. "Candies?"

"Oh, the ingenuousness of childhood!" exclaimed Mr. Tresyllion. "How obstinately they refuse to let us credit them with a disinterested preference for our society! Well, Reggie, there may be a packet of wholesale indigestion in the left-hand pocket. Now mind, left; if you don't remember it to-day, I shall give the box to Jack."

It was pretty to see the elaborate care and attention the little fellow gave to the consideration of the subject before making that final plunge, which proved successful.

"How you spoil them!" said Miss Kate, rebukingly. "And you know I don't like them to eat sweets."

"Oh, chocolates won't hurt," he said, glancing up. "Halloa! Jane," he exclaimed in surprise, as he caught sight of me, "you here!"

"How on earth do you know Jane?" asked Miss Kate, wonderingly.

"Have you forgotten how and where we first met?" he said, laughingly. "Jane is quite an old acquaintance of mine. I saw so much of her at the Crays'."

"Oh, of course; I remember now. You are there a great deal."

She said it rather coldly and stiffly, and busied herself with the tea-cups, and poured out some fresh tea which the footman brought in just then.

I rose to take my leave; but she would not hear of my going, so I went over to the window, and Master Reggie followed me with his picture-book, and I sat there with him on my knee showing him the pictures, and receiving an occasional chocolate-drop as a reward.

I was wondering how Mr. Tresyllion had come to be so very intimate in the household. The two boys always addressed

him as "Rex," and, indeed, Miss Kate once or twice did the same. Master Jack seemed just to adore him, and I must say that I never met any one with so pleasant and taking a way with children as he had.

"Do you know, Mrs. Carruthers," he said once, "that I always hold you up as a model of the domestic virtues to all my married lady friends. I know no one else who allows her children in her boudoir to the sacred feminine institution of five o'clock tea. It is a very charming idea. I wish they would; but, perhaps," he added, reflectively, "the habit might have its drawbacks. They are apt to have quick ears and sharp memories, and the society that drops in for 'five o'clocks' is not always as innocent and harmless as——"

"Yours?" she suggested, as he paused.

"Thank you," he said. "My youth, and extreme modesty, which you may have observed——"

"Frequently," she said, with the greatest gravity of face and voice.

"I feared you might have overlooked it. I can't say how your assurance relieves me. But I was about to remark that if you attend many of these feminine conclaves, you have no doubt noticed the special friend or two—of the male persuasion—who drops in with the undeviating regularity of a machine."

She coloured softly and looked embarrassed. He suddenly put down his cup.

"I—I beg your pardon," he said, earnestly. "I sometimes forget, when speaking to you, how different you are from—from other women."

"Oh, no," she said in a constrained, hurried way. "Don't think that, pray. I—I am very much guided by my own wishes in such matters. If I did not like to have the children with me I shouldn't let them in. As it is——"

"As it is, you have some womanly instincts and feelings," he said, softly. "And yet you're not one of the silly, gushing type of mothers."

"I observe," she said, "that you are getting reflective. Let me warn you in time. It is a bad habit, and, once acquired, not easily shaken off."

"I know," he said, "that you treat everything lightly; but you, yourself, cannot be lightly treated or—thought of," he added, in a lower tone. "There may be now and then a person—even not reflective—who has found that out."

"I am sorry for that imaginary person," she said.

She leant back in her chair and took up her fan—a large palm-leaf one, which she moved lightly to and fro—glancing at him the while in a provocative, mischievous way, for which I should like to have shaken her.

"You are quite sure," he said, lowering his voice, "that it is imaginary?"

"As sure as that I take everything lightly, and have never given any subject five minutes' serious consideration in my life," she answered.

"You don't expect me to believe that," he said. "I wonder why you always try to make me believe you are frivolous."

"Oh," she said, with unembarrassed readiness, "pray don't speak as if I had made an effort to impress you with my being—anything. Didn't we agree the other night that everything in the world is illusive, and imaginary, and that the theory of the primordial atomic globule was the only theory any sensible person ought to take of the mystery of existence?"

"The other night," he said, "we talked a great deal of nonsense, and called it philosophy."

"Let us make a change, then," she said, laughing up at him as he leant slightly forward. "To-day we will talk philosophy and call it—nonsense."

"No," he answered; "I am not in the mood for either subject."

"Are you going to be serious?" she asked, waving the fan slowly to and fro, so that it sometimes revealed, sometimes hid her face. "Be warned in time. I am not, and I don't intend that you should be."

"And why?" he said, impetuously. "Is my mood to wait on yours? I am not at all fond of being dictated to, nor at all meek under coercion."

"No more am I. What a wonderful similarity of disposition, is it not? Now, who is going to yield?"

"Place aux dames," he said, laughing. "I give in as usual."

"You need not have done so," she said, "for I am just going to dismiss you. I am due at one of those feminine conclaves to which you alluded so slightly a few moments ago. Will you stay and amuse Jack and Reggie while I change my gown, or shall I say good-bye now?"

"Where are you going?" he asked, rather eagerly. "Perhaps I am bound for the same place."

"I think not," she said. "For I asked my hostess if she knew you, and she said she had not that honour."

"You did not offer to supply the necessary introduction, I suppose?"

"Why should I?" she said, rising from the chair, and standing there in her pretty, indolent grace before him. "Don't you think we have enough mutual acquaintances already?"

"If I said—no?"

There was something in his eyes and voice that seemed to startle her. She turned quickly away.

"Come, boys," she said, "say good-bye to Rex; he is going."

The young fellow's face turned very pale; his eyes flashed stormily; but he said nothing as the children rose up, only tossed Reggie up in his strong arms, and then set him down with a kiss.

Meanwhile, Miss Kate made a sign to me.

"Come to my bedroom, Jane," she said; "we can finish our chat while I am changing my dress."

She turned, and held out her hand.

"Try and bear up," she said, mockingly. "The parting is not for very long;" and she laughed, and moved away to the door, while he stood silently watching her with something in his eyes which was not anger or pain, but surely a blending of both.

I followed her, leaving the children clinging to Mr. Tresyllion's arm.

Once in her bedroom, she seemed to change quite suddenly. Perhaps she had forgotten I was there; I don't know. The colour faded from her face; her eyes grew sad and wistful. She went over to the mantelpiece, and leant one hand on it as if to support herself.

"What is it, Miss Kate; you are ill?" I cried, anxiously.

She started, and made a visible effort to command herself.

"The season is trying me, I think," she said, "or I am not as strong as I used to be. Really, Jane, sometimes I am obliged to confess I feel—tired."

She laughed a little, mirthless laugh—more pathetic to me than tears.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," I cried, as I came over to her and put my arm round the trembling figure, for all the world as I used to do when she was a little child. "Go away from here—go to your own safe, quiet home. This is not the place, not the life for you. Why should you wear out your health and youth and strength for the sake of society? What can it give you in exchange?"

"I should have said nothing, a month

ago," she said, wearily. "I dare say you are right, Jane; my life is not healthy or natural, only I seem now as if I can't do without excitement. The days are so long, the hours so wearisome."

"They should not be that, surely," I said. "What do you lack? You have a beautiful home, a good husband, children, friends, position, money. You ought to be as happy as the day is long."

She turned on me with something of the old fire and passion.

"Happy!" she cried, "I happy! What are those things to one cursed with my restless, miserable, discontented nature? Don't talk to me of happiness; you take the world's view of it; you don't even understand the meaning of the word!"

She tore off her beautiful gown and tossed it aside with superb disdain, and, somehow, how or why I don't know, but as I saw her moving to and fro in that restless, impetuous fashion, I thought of the pretty child-figure with the bare arms and neck, and short, white, fluttering skirts, that I had watched dancing like a leaf in the wind, in that hotel bedroom in Paris so many years ago. And as I thought of it the tears rushed to my eyes, and it seemed to me as if I must speak one word of warning if only for the sake of that memory.

"Miss Kate," I said, and then a sob rose in my throat, and she turned and looked at me in wonder. "Oh, Miss Kate," I went on in a broken, foolish fashion, "don't be angry with me, don't be offended. Remember I am only your old nurse, who loves you better than any one else in the world. Oh, my dear, I know what troubles you—and—and it will only get worse. Any one must be blind not to see that. Don't rush into wilful misery; don't add another to the many sad histories of society women. Your fate is marked out, you can't alter it now. You are not happy; but better a little unhappiness at the first than the misery that will surely follow—if—if you yield."

She sank down on the chair by the dressing-table. Her face was very white. Her great, dark eyes looked at me like the eyes of some wounded and suffering creature.

"You have noticed—even you," she said in a stifled, husky voice. "Good Heaven! have I fallen so low already?"

"I have been mad, I think," she went on, brokenly. "I thought I was so safe; that I should never care; that I could defy Fate. Oh, Jane, you are right. My

good angel must have sent you to me. I will leave town at once—to-morrow, if possible. I—oh, it isn't possible that I should care so much, that it will hurt me to do it. I was always such a coward, you know, Jane. I—I never could bear pain well. But if it has to be done, it must be done quickly—at once. Oh, you are right, quite right, I know; and I—what a blind, silly fool I have been! But I shall stop in time. You have shown me the precipice, while I was looking only at the flowery path that led to it. But, oh! Jane, Jane!—"

She threw herself into my arms, my poor, pretty dear, just as if she was the little, wilful, passionate child I used to scold and pet in the old days. It wrung my heart to hear her sob. It made me bitterly indignant to think of the selfishness, and cruelty, and vanity that had led her on to suffer like this.

"As if one woman at a time wasn't enough," I said to myself in bitter indignation. "What brutes men are!"

And then Miss Kate drew herself away from my arms, and suddenly seemed to grow quite cold and calm.

"Go home now, Jane," she said, "and don't worry about me any more. When I once make up my mind to do a thing, I can trust myself to get through with it. I have been playing with fire, but the scorch and the pain have only hurt me—no one else."

She kissed me, and then put me aside somewhat hurriedly.

"Good-bye, Jane," she said. "Heaven bless you for your faithful love. When to-morrow comes, think of me, and—and pray for me now and then. Perhaps I may need your prayers, Jane, more than you think—need them, though I have taken your advice and gone away from—from this hateful town to—to, what was it you called it, Jane?—my own safe, quiet home—my own safe—quiet—home."

LONDON'S COUNCIL.

WHILE all over the country the new County Councils are coming into existence, and will soon replace the existing Government by Justices of the Peace in the rural districts, and will reinforce the existing municipal organisations with fresh powers and functions, although the change will be felt in various ways, yet the practical difference to people in general will not be very great. But in London the change is

organic, and gives hope of a new order of things, to arise out of the chaos of the present vague and conflicting powers.

Strictly speaking, hitherto there has been no London, beyond the ancient limits of the City. When London had to be spoken of, the real existing London, with its millions of inhabitants, it was necessary to define what was meant. As the sound of Bow Bells grew fainter and fainter in the far-off suburbs, people heard of London within the Bills of Mortality, as though there were no question of any but the dead. Then after a long interval we had London according to the Local Management Acts, and London after the School Board measurement. Criminal London, whereof the hub is the Old Bailey, had wider limits still, and the London of the Metropolitan Police is the most extensive of all, and embraces a good deal of what is pure unsophisticated country. And there was Parliamentary London, of still more irregular boundaries. But now at last we are to have a real definite London, with its representative Council, and boundaries, and jurisdiction, which must sooner or later supersede all the rest. At last we have a municipality which, if it be equal to its destinies, should become the greatest and most powerful that ever existed.

That a new era will begin with the new Government of London, everybody must hope. Experienced people of mature years may have hoped before, and have been disappointed. The Board of Works, which the new Council supersedes, was expected to do great things for the improvement of London; nor did it altogether fail of its purpose. A complete system of main drainage—complete except as to the most important part, perhaps, the ultimate disposal of the sewage—the Thames Embankment, free bridges, new thoroughfares, new parks, and open spaces; all these will form a handsome monument to the memory of the moribund Board. And, to begin with, the new Council will be little more than the old Board "writ large," with one hundred and thirty-eight members, instead of sixty, and elected direct by the rate-payers of the metropolis, instead of indirectly by vestries and public bodies. Still, London will have been made; its Local Parliament must ere long assume the duties that naturally belong to such an assembly, and doubtless it is destined to absorb all other Boards that, at present, deal with metropolitan affairs. The public

health, public education, the care of the poor, the control of the supplies of gas and water; all these must eventually come under the government of the new Council, which is certainly numerous enough, and, in all probability, will be able enough to deal with every function of municipal life.

Such anticipations give rise to sanguine forecasts of the future of our great metropolis. We do not expect the new Council to convert the City from brick to marble. The former suits us better, and even the common yellow brown variety harmonises in its hues with the fog in the air, and the dirt in the streets, and claims our sympathy by its quiet, unobtrusive ugliness. A great part of the general public when it hears, for the first time, perhaps, of the new Council, asks, will it keep the streets clean? Nothing is more amazing to the uninitiated observer, than to see the dirt and slop of London streets lasting all the winter through, and to be told at the same time of the number of unemployed who are almost starving in their compulsory idleness. Perhaps with less mud we should have fewer fogs; and certainly we should have more healthy existences. With mud and slush come catarrh, influenzas, fevers, rheumatic pains, and a considerable number of the ills that flesh is heir to; and against mud and slush let us hope that we may find doughty champions in the new County Councils.

The regulation of street traffic, which is now an affair of police, seems to come within the province of a London Council. Dangerous crossings should be bridged over for foot passengers, blocks and delays in wheeled traffic should be prevented by traffic inspectors, who would exercise a general supervision over the movement in the streets.

Perhaps, under the new rule, there will be somebody to look after the cattle-drovers, and to prevent the cruelties often inflicted on the poor beasts, which are constantly marching up to death to supply our tables; as well as to protect us from the dangers of cattle over-driven, and half-maddened with thirst, in the midst of crowded thoroughfares. All this was supposed to have ceased with the horrors of old Smithfield; but such is not by any means the case.

But in addition to dealing with the traffic, our new Council should have power to construct, or authorise the construction of new means of locomotion, without the necessity of any but a formal reference to

the Imperial Parliament. In some of our large cities, the municipal authorities themselves construct tram-lines where they are required, and lease the running powers over them to private companies. But in any case the London Council will have a preponderating influence over all new schemes of the kind. A system of subways for the conveyance of gas and water-pipes, and of every description of electric and other wires, has long been advocated; and though the immediate expense would be great, the saving in labour and in the maintenance of the roadway would also be great, and the intolerably growing nuisance of overhead wires, which threaten all manner of evils to buildings and passengers, could then be finally suppressed.

The supply of gas and water is a still more important matter; but this is a question which bristles with all kinds of difficulties. The existing water companies are strong and old-established, and firmly grounded on their enormous revenues, and so they work their wills upon us almost unchecked. They hold the power, and exercise it freely, of cutting off a household from all supplies of this vital necessary, in happy disregard of all sanitary considerations. And considering that all public sources of water supply have fallen into disuse, or been condemned, it would seem that to deprive people of water is a "peine forte et dure," which, if inflicted at all, should only be by a regular court of justice. On the other hand, the existing sources of our water supply are mostly of a very poor character, as regards purity and freedom from organic matter; and a burning question for the consideration of our new Council will be, whether it shall assume the duty of finding more distant sources of supply, where a pure and limpid fluid, uncontaminated by sewage, might be obtained. It would be an enterprise altogether practicable to bring an aqueduct from the Severn Valley, or the Malvern Hills, or even from the more distant mountains of Wales. Only the want, now happily supplied, of an autonomous Government for this great metropolis, has caused this important question to have been so long neglected.

If the gas monopoly is less objectionable to the general, that is because people can do without it in their houses, now that lighting by mineral oil has made such progress. Still, its effects are grievously felt in all commercial establishments, and unduly swell their general trade expenses.

And the effective lighting of our streets, whether by gas or electricity, is a matter with which our County Council must soon concern itself.

The housing of the labouring poor of London is also a question of pressing importance for the new Council. And also the condition of that vast floating, homeless population, estimated at thirty thousand souls, that resort to common lodging-houses, and supply many of the most dangerous elements of our social state. While even worse than the state of these is that of the crowded population of so-called tenement houses in the lowest quarters of the town, where every kind of social evil festers and increases. And surely something will be done in winters to come, in the way of public refuges, where the most wretched of homeless wanderers may find warmth and a shelter.

When sundry matters come under the control of the Council, we may hope for an energetic carrying out of existing sanitary laws, and a general improvement in the conditions of existence. Hospitals for infectious diseases and asylums for lunatics, must soon come under the control of the Central Council, and greater efficiency, combined with economy, may confidently be expected.

There is certainly a succession of herculean tasks awaiting the new Council, and it is to be hoped that it will prove strong enough to grapple with them. With the paramount claims of health and comfort, clean streets and ready means of communication, much may also be done to make London a city beautiful. Trees along the broad boulevards, fountains and flower-beds; all the brightness and charm that can be impressed upon sombre streets and sad-coloured suburbs. All these things will no doubt be cared for by the new ediles of greater London. Also, it will be their duty to urge the Legislature to justly apportion the costs of all the great improvements of the future between those, the great bulk of its constituents, who have but a short, uncertain tenure of their advantages, and the few whose property is constantly enhanced in value by the public works of which they have hitherto borne but an infinitesimal portion of the cost.

A new London is arising, to the extension of which it is impossible to set any bounds. It has been calculated that if the metropolis increases at its present rate for the next forty years, at the end of that period it will embrace a population of something

like twelve millions of souls. Even now, with its four millions of inhabitants, it is a city the like of which the world has never seen before; a state that for wealth, and revenues, and far-reaching influence, bears the palm over any in ancient or modern times. But if its riches and prosperity are unequalled, so also are its misery and degradation. And hence the enormous responsibility of its new rulers. The good they may do will expand and multiply in never-ending increase; but the evils they leave untouched will grow and develop with still greater luxuriance. Yet a hopeful augury for the future is to be found in the general interest that is taken in the election and constitution of the new Council.

HARMONY.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

ANY one who was unfortunate enough to have been walking along the dusty road to Pengollan on a certain day at the end of June, not many years ago, might have felt rather inclined to wonder whether, after all, summer was as entirely delightful as he had been wont to think. But no one in the little orchard behind the white-walled cottage, which some flower-loving rustic had named "Rose-in-the-Fern," could have failed to be grateful for the arrival of a real June day.

Lounging at ease in the long grass, his head supported by the lichen-grown trunk of an ancient apple-tree, Frank Hardy was enjoying life as it can only be enjoyed in the days when the name "long vacation" seems absurdly paradoxical, and when an uneventful day is deemed not "dull," but "peaceful." Around him were a few score fruit-trees, of which the majority were old, and covered with the orange and grey tints of lichen. Rows of leafy sycamores stood along the walls, which shut off this little paradise from the glaring high-road beyond, and which were clad in a profusion of glistening hart's-tongue ferns. It was not yet noon; but the jubilant noise of early morning had grown silent, and the constant murmuring of the bees, as they sped to and fro throughout a little plot of garden ground, made the stillness seem only more intense. Gazing across the curiously-shaped flower-beds, with their wealth of moss-roses, fragrant pinks, harebells, and homely stocks, Frank had long been

watching a window which stood wide open, as if to let in the scent of the roses which covered the walls of the cottage, and clambered over the low, brown-thatched roof.

Frank Hardy had just come down for the "long," and was spending a portion of it with his brothers and sisters at Pengollan, a diminutive village on the north coast of Cornwall, beautiful in the extreme, but dull to desperation. To the younger members of the family the stalking of tiny, though ferocious crabs, and the building of wave-defying sand castles, were so delightful, that nothing, save constant rain, could well have made them weary of the place. Frank, however, might have found the time lying rather heavily upon his hands, had it not been for the fact that he was in that blissful state when a man desires only one thing, and is just beginning to own to himself that his hopes of some day securing that prize are not altogether baseless.

Presently he rose and walked towards the window. At a table in the room into which he was looking sat his cousin, Maud Stanley. Her face was buried in her hands, and hidden by tumultuous masses of soft, gold-brown hair; while she was studying with desperate earnestness the pages of a book entitled "The Elements of Harmony." She had turned away from the window, as if to avoid the manifold temptations offered by the orchard-shades beyond; so that Frank stood there unnoticed for some minutes. Presently, however, she sighed wearily, and leaned back in her chair. At that moment Frank tore a branch of scented verbenas from a big shrub near at hand, and flung it so that it fell noiselessly amid the papers whereon his cousin had been copying some musical exercises.

"I say, Maud," he cried, "it's a downright shame to waste a day like this! As for harmony—it would be much more in harmony with the weather if you were to come out and sit under the trees with me."

Maud looked up at him piteously.

"Frank, I really must work at this, or I shall fail when the examination comes on. I can't come yet, but you know I would like to."

"Would you really?" responded the young man in a satisfied tone. "I can't think why girls will bother themselves with exams, or why they are so horrified at the prospect of a plough. I wonder if I could help you, though?"

He stepped into the room, and taking up the book, glanced slowly through its earlier pages.

Maud watched him curiously the while; and, when at last he laid down the book with a despairing sigh, said, with a note of triumph in her voice :

"It is difficult, isn't it ?"

"Awfully !" replied Frank. "I'm afraid I shan't be able to help you directly; but I could sit here and sympathise until you have done as much as you think necessary."

"Indeed you will not !" cried Maud, her blue eyes flashing saucily. "Go back to your seat in the orchard, and perhaps I will come to you in a little while."

There was a very impatient look on his boyish face, as he returned to his seat under the apple-tree, and proceeded to fill a short, black meerschaum. This done, he leaned back against the tree, and soon was lost in deep meditations on a subject, the weightiness of which was evident from the solemn and deliberate manner in which he puffed at his unlovely pipe. Indeed, the matter then engaging his thoughts was one which, under the circumstances, demanded the fullest possible consideration. It was a question of no less a thing than a tramp of five miles, to Fairford, the nearest town to Pengollan.

The day, as we have already stated, was a hot one, and the road to Fairford lay white with dust beneath the broiling sun, shaded by not so much as a single tree when once it had passed the orchard wherein Frank Hardy now lay at ease. So that he, lying clad in cool flannels, amid the thick grass, shaded by silvery-green foliage, and not so much feeling the sun's warmth as seeing and hearing it in its effect upon the flowers and insects around him, was naturally slow to decide on giving up his present comfort, and undertaking a journey which could not fail to be tiresome in the extreme. But he happened to have strong motives for making the sacrifice, and so at last he rose, and exclaiming, "I'll do it !" leapt over the hedge of the orchard and walked off quickly in the direction of Fairford.

Had he then forgotten Maud's words when she said : "Perhaps I will come to you in a little while" ? She, at least, had remembered them ; and, half an hour after he had left the orchard, she stepped out into the garden. A wide-brimmed hat shielded her face from the sunlight ; but had he not forgotten her promise he

might have deemed himself a happy youth to see her as, with lips half-parted, she stood reaching up to pull down a great cluster of pink roses, and fastened them in her soft, white dress.

One may be pardoned, perhaps, for thinking that Maud believed him to be watching her at this moment. At any rate, no one could have refused to render homage to her beauty as she stood to choose which cluster of roses pleased her best ; and she certainly was needlessly deliberate in arranging them when once they were gathered. What was it he had called her yesterday while he asked for one of the roses which she wore ?—"My rose, that sweetens all my air." Then suddenly he had ceased, and asked tenderly, almost anxiously : "And there will be no thorns, dear, for me ?"

She had answered his question with a careless laugh, but she had not forgotten ; and now, as she looked down at the newly-gathered flowers, a quiet smile stole across her face, and her heart made answer even as he would have desired.

But presently she was struck by the silence which reigned unbroken throughout the orchard. She had expected to hear his blithe young voice hail her cheerily, and to see him eagerly preparing her a pleasant seat. Now, when she looked towards the old apple-tree, she saw that he was not occupying the seat which he had made his own. Nevertheless, she walked towards it, inwardly determining to punish him for this neglect with several minutes of dignified frigidity. When she reached the favoured spot, she saw no signs of his having occupied it except an old magazine, whose every page she had already studied.

"Frank," she cried, softly, "I am waiting." Then, after a few moments of eager expectation, she cried again : "Frank ! I have done with harmony for to-day."

But there came no answer ; and, with a hurt look upon her face, Maud left the orchard and went off to meet her aunt and her cousins, who would soon be returning from the beach to dinner.

CHAPTER II.

PASSING down the single winding street which—together with a few scattered cottages on the hillsides at whose feet the village stands—constitutes the whole of Pengollan ; leaving behind you the small cottage-chapel, with its dazzling white

walls and thatched roof, and the old church, with its tower built of alternate blocks of grey granite and of jet-black slag, which was brought, years ago, from the copper-smelting works which then existed at Fairford, you come at last to a place where the road crosses a great expanse of billowy grass land, fragrant with wild thyme, and brightened in spots with golden stone-crop. On the left hand the land, or, to use the local term, the "towans," rise slowly towards the beach; on the right hand are one or two farmsteads, with here and there the lonely cottage of a labourer, from all of which there issue flocks of geese to feed along the muddy bank of a small stream, which presently loses itself in a reed-covered marsh. Soon, however, the road swerves to the right, and runs for mile after mile parallel with the coast line.

Following this road for about a mile, and then leaving it for the space of ground, heather-clad, and honeycombed by generations of rabbits, which separates it from the edge of the cliffs, you suddenly find yourself looking down into a valley which grows gradually shallower as it passes back from the face of the cliffs to the road. Its sides are steep, and covered everywhere with purple heather, and great clumps of yellow gorse, while now and then you may find a spray of pure white heather half-hidden beneath more lusty growths of the commoner kinds. A small stream, rising from a perennial spring half-way up the valley, flows murmuring along its bottom, falling at last to the rocks on the beach, some thirty yards below. Sitting near the mouth of this gorge, there can be seen towards the west the line of low hills which form the western boundary of the bay, and the grey old houses of the fishing-town which stands on their furthest slopes.

Frank and his cousin had already spent many hours here, and looked on this place, which they had called the Happy Valley, as being their own property. Frank, therefore, finding on his return from Fairford, that all his friends had left "Rose-in-the-Fern" in order to spend the afternoon elsewhere, took a hasty meal and set off in the direction of the valley in the cliffs. Here he flung himself down with a sigh of contentment, and the scent of the thyme, whereon he had lain down, surged up around him, as would the waters of a still pool around one who should plunge therein. For a while he was content to watch the sunlight, and to listen to the whisper of the waves as they lapped softly on the beach below.

Presently, however, he took a book from the pocket of his bright-hued "blazer," and, glancing round as if to ascertain whether he was alone, he set himself to con its pages with far more earnestness than he had ever evinced in reading for the schools.

Meanwhile, Maud's indignation at Frank's desertion of her had slowly died away, or rather had yielded momentarily to a burning desire to discover what possible counter-attraction had caused him voluntarily to forego her company. She had gone down to the beach after dinner, but grew tired of the noisy laughter of her cousins, and presently left them to their play, and went off across the "towans" towards the quiet valley, whither Frank had only just preceded her. She had reached the edge of the slope, and was wondering whether it would be possible for her to make the descent without the help of the strong young arm which usually was placed at her service whenever there was—often when there was not—the slightest pretext for its being offered, when she saw a puff of smoke rise from the bottom of the valley, and fly off on the wings of the wind from the sea. Then, glancing at the spot whence it appeared to come, she beheld a pair of brown leather boots. Never dreaming that Frank would have come here, she was just moving away, indignant that an idle tourist should thus intrude on her domain, when the owner of the boots suddenly changed his position, and she caught sight of a "blazer," which she recognised as Frank's. Indignation once more took possession of her. She turned, and walked along the side of the valley, until, standing at its head, she could see Frank clearly. "He grew tired of waiting for me," she said. "He could not wait half an hour." Slowly she walked down the valley, determined to give her cousin a chance of explaining his apparent carelessness. She did not want to quarrel with him; but surely it was right that he should learn that she was not to be thought lightly of because he happened to have known her all his life.

As she approached nearer to him she saw that he was reading. Then she guessed what he had been doing.

"I told him this morning that I wanted a book, and he must have gone over to Fairford and fetched one. Poor fellow! how tired he must be!"

So saying, she walked quietly towards her unconscious lover, smiling as she thought how glad his face would be when

he should turn and see her there. At last she stood within a few yards of him, and still he remained in ignorance of her presence. But she was on the opposite side of the stream, and the ground was damp and muddy, so that she could approach no nearer.

"Have you been waiting for me, Frank?" she cried, gaily.

Her cousin started to a sitting posture, and answered in the guiltiest of tones:

"No—that is—— Why, Maud, where did you spring from?"

Maud was sufficiently astonished at the words, still more at the embarrassed tone in which he had spoken them. She had seen, too, that he blushed hotly when he heard her voice, and that even now he was trying to smuggle out of sight the book in which he had been so deeply interested a few moments before.

Her voice was very cold and dignified as she replied:

"Are you tired of my company, that you couldn't wait for me this morning, and left me to play with the children this afternoon? You might, at least, offer to help me across the stream."

Then, as he stepped forward with outstretched hand to give her the help she had demanded, she exclaimed:

"No, thank you; I prefer being here."

Frank looked bewildered.

"I am sorry, Maud," he said, "but I wanted to get a—some things in Fairford, and quite forgot that you were coming to me."

At this confirmation of her first explanation of his neglect, Maud looked more friendly, and said:

"You went to Fairford to get a book? Oh, Frank, I am glad! I think I've read every scrap of print in the house. What did you get?"

At Maud's first words Frank had once more blushed fiercely; as she concluded, his face was a picture of blank despair.

"No, Maud, I didn't—that is, I was in a hurry, and forgot it. But I will go over at once and get you one."

Once again the friendliness vanished from Maud's face, and it became a perfect study of outraged dignity.

"Never mind, thank you," she replied. "You have a book, and you are hiding it from me at this moment. Besides, you blushed when you saw me here. And as you don't offer to lend it me, I suppose that your book is unfit to be read by a lady."

She paused for a moment, as if to see

whether he would alter his mind. Her cousin stood on the opposite side of the stream, and his eyes seemed to beseech her to trust him, as he answered:

"I cannot lend you this book; but that is not because the book is not fit for you. Indeed, I think you have read it."

But evidently he was keeping something secret; and Maud, whose faith in him was generally perfect, disregarded his unspoken appeal to her faith, and said:

"I have no right to question you if you do not choose to answer; and, of course, you can read whatever you prefer. Besides, I have never read 'Paradise Lost,' or Montgomery's poems. I remember that both are in the parlour at 'Rose-in-the-Fern,' and I have always been fond of poetry."

So saying, the young lady retraced her footsteps up the valley, a little depressed that she had quarrelled with Frank, yet feeling at the same time a novel and rather pleasing sense of her own importance.

Frank stood and watched her as she went from him; and when at last she passed out of his view, he drew the unfortunate book from his pocket, and flung it angrily over the cliffs. The tide was rising rapidly, and the book fell amid the mingled sand and spray of the foremost waves. Frank watched it a while as it was carried hither and thither by the waves. When at last he lost sight of it, he clambered up the side of the valley and slowly made his way back to "Rose-in-the-Fern."

CHAPTER III.

HE had chosen to go by a footpath which led along the edge of the cliffs, and finally across a tract of desolate sand on to the "towans," and so into Pengollan. Along this path he walked thoughtfully, and not noting how the sky grew every moment darker and darker. At one point of his walk he caught sight of the road, and saw a white-robed figure, which he recognised as being Maud's, hastening into Pengollan. A moment later he glanced in the direction of the low-lying western hills towards which he was now moving. An unbroken mass of angry purple clouds rose high above them, and the sunlight, struggling through some nearer clouds, fell on the glistening plumage of a few sea-gulls which were visible as tiny moving specks of dazzling white against the purple background. Even while he watched their flight, the sunlight faded from the sea;

the waves on the further side of the bay grew suddenly dark and troubled, and he heard, mingled with the cries of innumerable sea-birds which floated through the air above and below, the wailing of a rising wind. Soon the rain had come, and he was drenched to the skin when presently he reached "Rose-in-the-Fern."

The rain fell constantly throughout the whole afternoon, and did not cease when, earlier than usual, darkness fell. Frank, after sitting with the others for the first part of the evening, went out at last to a disused shed in the old stack-yard at the side of the house, and sitting on the shafts of a clumsy country waggon, meditated miserably on the events of the past twelve hours. He had tried by numberless little attentions to effect a reconciliation with Maud, but she had vouchsafed only monosyllabic answers to his questions, and had greeted his attempts to secure her comfort with a chilly "Thank you." Meanwhile, could he but have known it, Maud was only less unhappy than himself. She sat in the little parlour, and vainly endeavoured to interest herself in Montgomery's poems. But through all she heard the wearisome drip-drip of the rain as it fell from the thatch to the gravelled path, and the shivering rustle of the wind-troubled roses outside; so that she found herself before long in just that state of mind in which Macaulay must have been when he wrote his criticism on the bard whose works she was reading. Presently, however, the wind grew silent; and, when the hour for retiring came round, the rain had altogether ceased. A cold "good-night" was the only greeting exchanged by the two lovers.

On the morrow the weather was again perfect, and the whole earth seemed to be fresher and brighter for the shower of the previous evening. Frank was awakened by the cooing of a big white pigeon, which had flown through his window, and was now perched, in an attitude of the absurdest pride, at the foot of his bed. He sprang up with an energy which made the startled fantail forget its dignity, and disappear through the window at which it had entered. Then he walked to the window and looked out at the tiny, old-time garden, whence a glossy blackbird darted with a shriek of indignation into the cool green orchard beyond.

The first thought was of Maud. "A glorious day again!" he exclaimed. "I'll get Maud to come——" Then he remem-

bered yesterday, and the sentence, begun in such glad tones, remained unfinished.

But while he was completing his toilet, he made up his mind to make strenuous efforts to prevent a second day being wasted through his own carelessness and Maud's lack of faith. He would go over to Fairford and get her some books; then, perhaps, she would be willing to forgive him. But when he reached Fairford, the bookstall at the railway station was not yet open. Life goes at an easy pace in West Cornwall, and especially is this true of all who are in any way connected with the railway. It was, therefore, late when he got back to Pengollan, and learned from Miss Dolby, the owner of "Rose-in-the-Fern," that all the others had gone down to the beach.

Just near Pengollan there is a sudden outward curve of the coast line, and for a mile or so there are no cliffs worthy of the name. The "towans" rise slowly from the road, and finally slope down in steeples of loose sand to the smooth, broad beach. The road does not follow this curve, but goes straight ahead until it once more nears the rugged cliffs amid which lies the Happy Valley.

Frank then pocketed one or two of the books which he had brought from Fairford, and made his way across the "towans" until he stood just above the beach to which Pengollan is largely indebted for its popularity.

Then he sat down among the clumps of reed-like grass, planted by the farmers whose sheep graze on the "towans," so as to prevent their pasturage from being destroyed by the drifts of sand which would assuredly be carried inland on stormy days if anywhere the loose sand were uncovered.

Maud and her cousins were walking along the water's edge, and it was not long before they had noticed Frank's arrival. The children greeted him with shouts; but Maud made not the slightest sign of recognition; and so he was content to lie back in his seat and watch them, waiting for a moment when Maud should be separated from her companions, to approach and renew his attempts at bringing about a reconciliation. Presently, however, a strange excitement became apparent among the members of the little group on the sand. The children had been gathering, with the indiscriminating acquisitiveness of their kind, a heterogeneous collection of portable property, in the shape of sea-

shells and big slabs of cork. One of them, running on ahead of the others, suddenly returned to Maud's side, bearing what appeared to be another mass of cork.

"Look at this, Cousin Maud!" he cried, "I've found a book."

Maud took his treasure-trove from his outstretched hand, and began to examine it carefully. The child watched her eagerly; but he did not notice the sudden gladness which lit her face, nor the quick glance which she cast toward the lonely watcher on the sand-hill.

"Yes, it is a book, Jack," she said at length. "Will you sell it to me for a penny?"

The child looked up at her with the wildest delight.

"I don't want it. I'll give it you if you want it; but I'll take the penny."

Maud extracted the required coin from a dainty purse, wrote a pencil note on a scrap of paper, and gave both to her young cousin.

"Take that to auntie," she exclaimed. "I think you'd better all go to her. I am going to speak to Frank."

Nothing loth, the children sped off to where Mrs. Hardy sat comfortably ensconced in a snug corner under the shade of a great pile of rocks. She was a little astonished at receiving the note; but she had not been blind to the events of the last few days; had guessed that her niece had quarrelled with Frank, and so was not long in arriving at the real meaning of the note, which read:

"DEAR AUNTIE,—Frank and I are going over to the Happy Valley. MAUD."

Meanwhile, Frank had been puzzled at Maud's dismissal of her small cousins. Still more was he amazed to see her coming slowly towards him with Jack's treasure-trove held behind her back. As she drew near he ran down to meet her, in order to spare her the trouble of toiling up those slopes of loose, dry sand.

"Have you forgiven me, Maud?" he cried, gladly.

In a tone which would have been chilling if it had not been for the smile, half mischievous and wholly tender, which lurked in her blue eyes, Maud replied: "Will you lend me your book to-day, Frank?"

Frank blushed again as he had done yesterday. Maud saw this, but was not angered by it now. Nevertheless, when he stepped forward to give her the books

which he had just brought from Fairford, she retreated from him. "Will you, at least, tell me why you refused to lend it me?" she said, in a voice filled with badly-suppressed mirth.

Then, while Frank was still trying confusedly to discover an answer to her question, she brought forward the book which Jack had found at the tide-mark. She held it out to him, and said laughingly: "Have you lost it, and is this it?"

Frank took it from her, and while she read in his face the answer to her last question, he was looking down on the torn and sodden book which he recognised at once. The original covers had been torn off by the waves, but the title-page remained, and on it he read the words, "The Elements of Harmony;" while it was just possible to trace his own name, written hastily in pencil-marks, now almost obliterated. It was the book which he had yesterday flung over the cliffs—the book, to get which he had tramped through heat and dust to Fairford.

Then Maud spoke: "You dear old fellow, did you think that you could help me, and were you ashamed to be caught preparing it? Frank, I will trust you always now."

Then Frank began incoherently to tell how glad he was that their brief quarrel was ended; how wretched he had been while it lasted. And presently they moved away across the "towans" towards the Happy Valley.

DAY DREAMS.

I.

How they come, and how they go,
Ever fleeting, never slow,
Sailing up to Heaven;
Tiny, subtle, wayward things,
Brilliant meteors, sparkling rings,
Which flash, and then are riven!

II.

How they go, and how they come,
Some so restful, yearning some;
Others like wild flowers!
Some like fragrant even-wind;
Some like clouds upon the mind,
Which, later, turn to showers.

III.

How they come, and how they go,
Born in sorrow, nursed in woe!
O happy, useless dreaming!
Rainbow-tinted, many-starred,
Teardrops shed, sweet fancies marred—
Is all to end in seeming?

THE GOLD-FIELDS OF THE BRITISH ISLES.

In Mr. Baring-Gould's novel of "John Herring," a reverend gentleman finds absolutely conclusive proof that the

Phœnicians were once settled in the West of England, in the "singular and significant fact that clotted cream is made nowhere in the world except in Devon, Cornwall, and Phœnicia." The argument is continued to show that not only were the Phœnicians settled there, but that they actually discovered and worked gold-mines. And then, in the story, occurs the "discovery" of a mine which is proclaimed to be the identical Ophir of King Solomon.

Now Ophir has been "discovered" in almost every quarter of the globe—from Cornwall to China, and from North India to South Africa; and we need not remind readers of "John Herring" that the Ophir in Cornwall turned out to be a swindle. Yet it is not only pretty certain that the Phœnicians were in Britain in Solomon's time, but it is also probable that they found gold there. It is said that they contracted to supply the Jewish King with tin, and tin was only found to any extent in the Old World in Cornwall. Pliny says that gold is found in tin, and, as a matter of fact, it is sometimes found in tin-washings. There is abundance of evidence in the old Latin historians that the mineral wealth of South Britain was the object of trade with the Phœnicians some centuries before the Romans came.

As for Ireland, Thomas Moore, in his *History*, says that "During the reign of Tighernmas, gold is said to have been worked for the first time in Ireland, a mine of that metal having been discovered in the woods to the east of the River Liffey." Now Tighernmas lived, if ever he did live, a very long time ago; and another Irish record gives the date Anno Mundi, 2816, as the year in which gold was first wrought by Tighernmas, and was made into ornaments by the men of Cualan, a district on the banks of the Liffey. A few years ago there was discovered in the bog of Cullen, on the borders of Tipperary and Limerick, a number of gold vessels and ornaments, and also crucibles, ladles, etc., for the working of the metal. All these were found under a bed of peat, which, according to geologists, must have been deposited within the last three thousand years. Again, as the Irish word for gold is "or," the occurrence of that affix to many names of places is held to be indicative of the existence of gold at or near the places. Thus Slieve-an-Ore (Co. Clare and elsewhere), means "Mountain of Gold"; Tullymore (Co. Down), "Little Hill of Gold"; Croom-

an-Ore (Co. Cork), "Hollow of the Gold"; Lug-an-Ore (Co. Tipperary), "Hollow of the Gold"; Glen-an-Ore (Co. Cork), "Glen of the Gold"; and so on.

Mr. Kinahan, official surveyor to the Geological Survey of Ireland, says, that it seems proved by the annals that the gold in the mountains of Dublin and Wicklow was worked by the ancient Irish. In the records of Brien Boiroidhe ("Brian Boru"), first King of all Ireland, there are many references to gold in the agreements with the different Kings and Princes whom he made tributary to himself.

But leaving the somewhat cloudy region of Irish legends, we have the authority of Mr. Kinahan for the statement that a proved auriferous quartz vein was discovered on Bray Head, Co. Wicklow, in or about the year 1882; that the rocks of the copper lode at Carrigacat, Dunmanus Bay, are auriferous; that the pyrites of Avoca (Co. Wicklow), contains traces of gold; and that a galena found at Connary also contains traces of the precious metal.

Elsewhere Mr. Kinahan is even more explicit. He says: "Gold has been got by streaming, or placer-mining, in diluvium near Slieve-an-Orra (Co. Antrim), in the Mayola River (Co. Londonderry), in the Dodder (Co. Dublin), and in the different tributaries of the Avoca (Co. Wicklow). Of the finds in Antrim and Londonderry little is known. In reference to the first, gold was found in the streams from Slieve-an-Orra into Glendun, prior to 1829; while in other streams from the same hills there are ferriferous sands. In a "Natural History of Ireland," written about the time of Charles the Second, "gold of Londonderry" is mentioned. Small pieces of gold have, of late years, been picked up in the gravel at Glennasmole, part of the Valley of the Dodder, while, quite recently (1878), a small nugget was found in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, in a load of gravel brought from the Valley of the Dodder.

It should be mentioned that in referring to the auriferous quartz of Co. Wicklow, Mr. Kinahan says that "There would seem to be some similarity between these rocks and those of Merionethshire, where gold has been worked near Dolgelly and Barmouth." This was written before Mr. Pritchard Morgan's now famous discovery; but the similarity of the rocks seems to have struck others, for there has been of late quite an eager gold-hunt instituted in Ireland.

There is little doubt that the discovery of anything like liberal deposits of gold would entirely change the fortunes of the "distressful country," whose troubles are so much due to lack of diversity of industries for the people.

But let us now take a look at the more substantial testimony of Wales.

The story of Mr. Pritchard Morgan's gold-hunt we may assume to be familiar to every reader. Suffice it to say that, after twenty years' gold-digging in Australia, Mr. Morgan came home with the determination of developing the gold-fields of his own country. He began in the Valley of the Mawddach, some eight miles to the North of Dolgelly in Merionethshire. After much preliminary work and costly quarrying, crushing was commenced in March, 1888; and, within four months, four thousand ounces of gold, of the value of fourteen thousand pounds, were obtained. This brilliant success led to the formation of the "Morgan Gold-Mining Company," and to the boring and prospecting of almost all the hills in Wales. Among recent discoveries may be named reputedly rich veins on Lord Newborough's estate in the Festiniog slate district, on Sir Watkin Wynn's property near Bala, and on the Pant Mawr, Bulchfyfordd, and Trowsfynydd estates.

Gold in Wales, however, is no new thing. The Pritchard Morgan mines are quite near an old working which yielded ore up to quite recent years. Writing in the "Industrial Review," in 1886, Mr. T. A. Readwin stated that "A good deal of virgin gold has in comparatively recent times been raised within five miles of Barmouth in Merionethshire." About the beginning of the present century there were some sixty square miles of mountains in Merionethshire belonging to nobody, which were subsequently appropriated under several Inclosure Acts, with the reservation to the Crown of the mineral rights. Of this tract Mr. Readwin said:

"Nearly the whole of this large area is more or less auriferous. From one locality, about twenty-five years ago, nine thousand three hundred and sixty-three ounces of gold were obtained by the veteran miner, John Parry, from less than forty tons of quartz, and this by means of the 'Brittens' alone." Speaking of the Gwyn-fynyff Mountain, in which the Morgan Mine is situated, Mr. Readwin says: "Practically there may be said to be in this mountain an inexhaustible quantity of

auriferous minerals, some samples of which are literally unsurpassable as to richness in gold and mineralogical beauty."

In a paper read before the British Association in 1844, Mr. Arthur Dean, C.E., said: "A complete system of auriferous veins exists throughout the whole of the Snowdonian, or lower Silurian, formations"—a statement which was practically confirmed some ten years later by Sir A. C. Ramsay, Director-General of the Geological Survey.

So much for the present, but it may be new to Londoners to be told that they owe part of their water supply to Welsh gold. It happened thus: In the reign of James the First, Sir Hugh Myddleton obtained a lease of the mines of Skibery Coed, in Cardiganshire, at a rental of four hundred pounds per annum. They proved so rich in yielding lead, and silver, and gold, that he cleared a profit of two thousand pounds per month. With wonderful magnanimity he devoted his profits to the task of supplying the City of London with water from the New River. For this work he received a knighthood; but he exhausted his means in the enterprise, and died in poverty, although a member of the Goldsmiths' Company.

The mines, leased by Sir Hugh Myddleton, passed over to Thomas Bushell, private secretary to Sir Francis Bacon, along with some other mines. These were so eminently lucrative that, on the outbreak of the Civil War, Bushell — afterwards knighted — was able to supply King Charles with a hundred tons of lead to make into bullets; with ten thousand arms for the soldiers; twenty thousand suits of clothes; a troop of horse to attend on the person of the King; a thousand miners as a life-guard; and ninety thousand pounds per annum for the King's use for five years; besides several thousands of gold marks for the privy purse.

Bushell also undertook to defend Lundy Island at his own expense.

All this was done out of the Welsh mines — not out of lead and silver, as is commonly supposed, but mainly out of gold — for Bushell had mines near Barmouth, which, as we have shown by Mr. Readwin, is auriferous country. Moreover, Bushell had a mint at Aberystwith, where he coined five-pound gold pieces, and where he doubtless also made the gold marks which he gave to the King.

To conclude, as regards Wales, the following counties of the Principality are

reputedly more or less auriferous: Merionethshire, Carnarvonshire, Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Flintshire, and Pembrokeshire. With the exception of Merionethshire, however, the recent discoveries have been insignificant.

When the Romans came to England, they were at first disappointed in their expectations of finding gold and silver. Cicero wrote to Atticus that "There is not a fragment of silver in the island, nor any hope of prize-money, except from slaves." But they soon found it both in England and Wales; and Tacitus, in his "Life of Agricola," says; "In Britain are gold and silver, the booty of war."

In fact, they found the Ancient Britons with coined gold money. Some of the coins of Cymbeline, Princes of the Trinobantes, are still in existence at the British Museum. They are all of unalloyed gold, which is believed to have been obtained from mines in Essex. Queen Boadicea is also said to have worked mines in Essex; to have "extracted much gold out of minerals and earth," and to have had a gold coinage. Some authorities consider that England had a native gold coinage as early as 200 B.C., and that the Britons learnt the art of smelting in their commerce with the Gauls.

According to the Roman historians, the Romans found other precious things than gold and silver in Britain. They speak of very fine pearls, of amethysts, rubies, diamonds, agates, and jet. They exported, besides these, tin, lead, copper, furs, wicker-baskets, slaves, and dogs (apparently beagles).

From the remains which can still be traced, it seems that the Romans themselves worked gold at the Poltemore Mines, in Devon, and at Newlands, in Cumberland, as well as at Ogofau, in Carmarthenshire, and at Leadhills, in Lanarkshire. The Newlands Mine was afterwards worked for copper; but in the reign of Henry the Third, mention is made of veins of gold and silver as well, in the same place.

A considerable check to gold-mining seems to have been given by the claim of the Norman Kings to all minerals, and, in fact, to everything not specifically granted. Later, this claim of the Crown was abandoned, except as regards gold and silver, which were retained for the purposes of coinage, and to support the dignity of the Crown. The retention of this last claim was, however, quite sufficient to check gold-mining by individuals, so that

down to the reign of Edward the First, there is very little mention of the subject. From Edward the Third to Richard the Second, however, there was some activity, and Edward the Third is said by Holinshed to have paid great attention to the gold-mines, as did also Henry the Sixth, and Edward the Fourth. Many gold-licenses were granted by these Kings, from which it is inferred that gold was being found not only in combination with other metals, but also in a virgin state. Edward the Third appointed a Warden of the gold and silver mines of Devon and Cornwall, leased some gold and silver mines to Bohemian merchants, and gave other grants of licenses of all mines of gold, silver, lead, and tin in Gloucester, and of gold and silver in Devon and Somerset. In this reign a law was passed permitting all persons to dig for gold and silver in their own lands, and to refine and coin it on condition of paying half the gold, and one-third the silver, to the Crown. It does not appear that the Royal receipts were much augmented by this enactment, the conditions of which it was probably easy enough to evade.

Richard the Second made grants of gold and silver licenses in Devon, Cornwall, Gloucester, and Somerset, and in Henry the Fourth's reign, there was a discovery of gold again in Essex. In Henry the Sixth's reign the Duke of Rutland obtained a monopoly of all the gold and silver mines in England for twelve years, and subsequently the Royal Mining Department was established, with a Comptroller of all mines containing gold and silver in combination with other metals. In the reign of William and Mary, however, it was declared that mines of tin, copper, iron, or lead, should not be regarded as Royal Mines, even though they also contained gold and silver. The reason for this enfranchisement was stated in the Act, namely: "That the statute of Henry the Fourth had prevented the home refiners from extracting gold and silver out of English ores, but that the art is exercised in foreign parts to the great loss and detriment of this realm."

Queen Elizabeth was very keen on the gold question. She granted patents to various individuals to search for gold and silver, or for ores containing them, in the counties of York, Lancaster, Cumberland, Westmoreland, Cornwall, Devon, Gloucester, and Worcester, as well as in Wales and Ireland. This was all very

well; but she also claimed and actually took possession of a copper-mine at Keswick, in Cumberland, which belonged to the Earl of Northumberland, on the score that there was much gold and silver in the copper. The case was taken to the Law Courts and was decided in favour of the Queen, on the ground that, "By the law, all mines of gold and silver within the realm, whether in the land of the Queen, or her subjects, belong to the Queen by prerogative, with liberty to dig and carry it away." Queen Elizabeth also tried to get hold of the Lanarkshire gold-mines in Scotland, during the minority of James the Sixth.

To sum up, not only has gold been sought for in almost every county in England, but it seems to have been actually worked, to greater or less extent, in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Gloucester, Bedford, Cumberland, Durham, and Lincolnshire.

The Scotch counties, in which gold is known to exist even now, are Lanarkshire and Sutherlandshire; but there are also records, at different times, of gold-working in Aberdeenshire, in Fife, in Dumfriesshire, in Selkirkshire, and in Kirkcudbrightshire.

The Sutherland gold was discovered as long ago as 1245, and even now is intermittently worked on the Duke's property. Like all gold-mining, it is very much of a lottery. Men will toil on from year's-end to year's-end barely earning a labourer's wage, and others will make a lucky find which comparatively enriches them. There is some prospect of the Sutherlandshire mines being systematically developed, and they are believed to be tolerably rich.

That gold was found in Fife, even earlier, appears from a grant, made in 1153, by David the First, to the Abbey of Dunfermline, of a tithe of all the gold in Fife.

It is assumed that, by 1424, the gold-mines of Scotland were attaining some importance, from the fact that the Scottish Parliament formally made a grant of them to the Crown, as well as all silver mines "in which three half-pennies (silver) could be fined out of a pound of lead."

The Lanarkshire gold was re-discovered in the reign of James the Fourth, and the Treasurer's accounts in the early part of the sixteenth century bear many payments for the working of the mines. In 1524, "Gold of the Myne" was ordered to be coined, and, in the same year, the Albany Medal was struck out of gold found at Crawford Moor. Between 1538 and 1542

it seems, from the accounts, that forty-one and a quarter ounces of Scotch gold were used in making a crown for the King; thirty-five ounces in one for the Queen; seventeen ounces for adding to the King's Great Chain; and nineteen and a half ounces to make a belt for the Queen. There was also a boar's tusk mounted with native gold to make a baby's coral for the Prince; a gold whistle for the King; and many other doubtless useful articles. And all the time a good deal was being coined.

The Lanarkshire Mines are said, by Pennant, to have yielded, at one time, one hundred and thirty thousand ounces, valued at three hundred thousand pounds. The most productive of these mines were at Leadhills, which were developed by Sir Bevis Bulmer under a grant from Queen Elizabeth and James the First. At Leadhills, lead-mining is still carried on by Lord Hopetoun, and we believe that gold is still occasionally found there. In the sand of the River Clyde above Glasgow, some years ago, particles of gold were found which had been washed down from the hills near these mines. Whether there is now enough gold in the Lanarkshire hills to make a crown for the Queen, we are not in a position to state; but there does not seem to be much activity in looking for it.

In truth, there are many more profitable employments than gold-mining, and there are not the same opportunities for "prospectors" in this country that there are in Australia and California. Yet, judging by the records of the past and the facts of the present, it would seem that the British Isles are more extensively veined with gold than is commonly supposed.

A WHIFF FROM THE PIPE

THE primeval smokers of the world were, it is almost unanimously agreed, the Indians of North America. These "untutored savages" looked upon tobacco as being a "peculiar and special gift, designated by the Great Spirit for their delectation;" and in such estimation did they hold it, that it figured prominently as one of the future delights of their "happy hunting-grounds."

The legend of its origin tells how, once upon a time when game was scarce and famine rampant, two of the red men left their wigwams to engage in the

chase. After traversing the forest for several miles, the fates, so long obdurate, became propitious, and soon a large stag lay stretched at their feet, a token of their prowess as hunters. With appetites sharpened by fasting and exercise, the two Indians speedily had a portion of their prey hissing and spluttering over their wood fire, and dispensing forth a most grateful odour. Attracted perhaps by this sweet savour, a beauteous spirit descended from the clouds and seated himself, an unbidden but welcome guest, at the banquet. The natives, proverbially hospitable, immediately offered to their visitor the tongue of the stag, that being esteemed the greatest delicacy. It was accepted, and, pleased with the attention, the spirit spake, saying: "Thirteen months hence, upon this very spot, shall ye find your reward;" then, having spoken, he departed.

In due time, our two hunters revisited the place. Upon the spot where the beneficent spirit had rested, three plants, till then unknown, were growing in full vigour—the maize, the tobacco, and the bean.

That the practice of smoking is very ancient is abundantly proved by the fact that, when America was discovered, every tribe with which Europeans came in contact was acquainted with the habit. And from that date to the present, they have clung to it as one of their primitive customs, elevated almost into a national usage by the fact that no tribal business of importance is considered completed unless the Calumet has gone its rounds, and invested, in respect to some tribes at least, with a quasi-religious character.

Its first manifestation to inhabitants of the Old World, dates back to November, 1492. Tobacco and a new world were discovered almost simultaneously, and, with regard to both, Columbus lay under a misapprehension. Believing that his dreams of a westward passage to India had been proved true, Columbus stepped upon the island which we now know as Cuba, but which he conceived to be Cipango, or Japan. After he had landed with all the pomp befitting a dignitary of Spain, and after he had taken possession of the island in the name of their sovereign majesties, Ferdinand and Isabella, and, like a good Catholic that he was, signed it with the sign of the cross, he had liberty to observe the curious assemblage of natives who had crowded down to the shore. While these latter

gazed with awe upon the vessels, which they imagined to be mighty sea-birds from across the boundless unknown, and which, indeed, from the wrongs that followed in their train, might well have been winged dragons, Columbus and his men observed that they carried "lighted brands" about with them. Ignorant of its charms, the Spaniards came to the conclusion that the natives were merely perfuming themselves, though, it must be allowed, in a somewhat peculiar manner. We can well understand that the odour of tobacco, genuine Cuba as this was, must have been sweet as the scent from thyme-clothed Hymettus to sailors newly released from the bilge-stinking, cramped quarters of their dilapidated sixteenth-century vessel.

These "brands" were the forerunners of our modern cigars, and were made by rolling together a few leaves of the plant, and enclosing them within a maize husk, a practice which exists in the more remote and less visited parts of America even up to the present time.

There was, however, a second mode of procedure. They used, as a pipe, a kind of Y-shaped reed, which was called "tabacos," a name transferred by the Spaniards to the "petun," or tobacco plant itself.

The plant was introduced into Spain by Hernando de Oviedo; but, although the habit of smoking must have been well known, and many a señor, returned from El Dorado, must have puffed his pipe, or twisted tiny cigarettes to tempt the rich ripe lips of the lovely daughters of that far-famed land, yet Hernando seems to have looked upon its cultivation merely from an ornamental point of view.

Shortly afterwards, however, its supposed medicinal properties began to be noised abroad, and one Francesco Hernandez is said to have "ascertained and extolled them." Parliaments were not so strict about the use of poisons then as they are now; invalids were not so scrupulously nice about the nasty messes they swallowed under the comprehensive name of medicine, and doctors had, perhaps, no coroners' quests to dread. But be that as it may, in spite of the countless virtues the plant was once supposed to possess, only one preparation—the Enema Tabaci—has now a place in the British Pharmacopœia.

In 1559, the French ambassador to Lisbon, Jean Nicot, having obtained some tobacco-seed from the captain of a vessel just home from the New World, presented a part of it to Catherine de Medicis,

which suggested the name *Herbe Medicee* for the plant. For Nicot, however, was reserved the honour of giving to tobacco its botanical name of *Nicotiana*; and here comes in a second coincidence, for both the New World and tobacco were named after others than those most entitled to the honour.

Thus far, tobacco seems to have enjoyed a friendly reception; but, perhaps owing to that unlucky number thirteen coming in the legend of its origin, opposition now arose on every side. In 1560 the plant reached Italy, and took hold upon the affections of the people until

The priests with awe,
As such freaks they saw,
Said, "The Devil must be in" that plant tobacco.

Its influence was felt to be against that mortification of the body, the benefits of which were so stoutly maintained in words, if not proved by deeds. Penances lost half their terrors with a pipe as comforter, and the priests were at their wit's end, when

The Pope, he "rose with a dignified look,
He called for his candle, his bell, and his book,
In holy anger, and pious grief,
He solemnly cursed that rascally" leaf!

But, as we know, tobacco, nevertheless, flourished, and its use spread.

Turkey, now its most devoted slave, opposed its entrance by brute force. The priests, who, of course, discovered no authority for its use in the Koran, stigmatised it as an innovation from Shitan; the Sultans, subservient to the priests, constituted it a crime; and in a land where heads were never too safe, the smoker found his a little more in jeopardy than of ordinary. But what availed this? Tobacco was destined to conquer the world in a far completer manner than did Alexander, and on it went triumphant, until the Turks not only acquired the habit of smoking, but invested it with the formalities and solemnities erstwhile in vogue in the ancient courts of Mexico.

Russia was next invaded; but mutilation availed nothing where terrors of death had failed, and depriving Slav smokers of their noses was less a hindrance to indulgence in the pipe, than was that yard of whipcord called the "bowstring."

Arabia, Persia, India, and China, each in its turn fell a victim to the seductive weed, and so speedy was its spread, that a doubt has arisen in some minds as to whether China was not acquainted with its use anterior to the discovery of

America. And if the young lady of to-day wish, lawyer-like, to find a precedent wherewith to cover the cigarette she is reported to dote upon, let her know that the small-footed damsels of the Flowery Land have for generations past numbered amongst the indispensable paraphernalia of dress, a highly-ornamented tobacco-pouch.

"The tide of progress flows westward," is a scholarly dictum; but here we have an innovation, an exception proving the rule, a stranger from the west running its victorious course from the land of the setting to the land of the rising sun. And, since peering into the future is nowadays the fashion, can we not foresee the time when the old order shall be reversed—when the New World shall in its turn pour forth its cornucopia upon the "benighted and effete" dwellers in the old countries?

To England tobacco was first brought by Sir John Hawkins in 1565; but to Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake is often ascribed that honour. It may be that Sir Walter deserved the distinction, for was he not the earliest English martyr for its sake? Are we not told in the chronicles of the times how one of that distinguished courtier's servants once came upon him while he was "engaged upon a pipe," and how, terrified by observing smoke issue from his master's mouth, he applied outwardly the contents of the tankard which he carried, thus both drenching and disfiguring the outward man, of which the noble Knight was so careful, and depriving the inner of the pleasure which the beer, applied in a proper and legitimate manner, would have afforded? I have often wondered whether, during those tedious twenty years which he spent within the four walls of a prison, the veteran hero was deprived of his pipe. Probably he was, for they were not very considerate of the feelings of political prisoners in that age.

It is strange that Shakespeare has no reference to the habit, which must have been prevalent in his days; though, if all the tales told of him be true, he was certainly "just the man" to take up any new "vice" which might cross his path. Why, then, is there no mention of it in his voluminous writings? For there is not the slightest doubt but that smoking became extremely popular in England; and although, owing to its price, only the rich could at first afford to indulge

in it, yet so highly was it esteemed that ladies of rank were numbered among its devotees.

But again it was destined to encounter opposition; and Englishmen, true to their national characteristic, endeavoured to put it down by Act of Parliament. Very shortly after its introduction, good Queen Bess issued a proclamation against it, and "the wisest fool in Christendom," in his "Counterblast to Tobacco," has left to posterity a specimen of that wit and wisdom for which his Royal Highness was renowned. "Smoking," he says, "is a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black, stinking fume thereof resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless."

Ben Jonson, too, in his "Gypsies' Metamorphosis," followed the cue given by his Royal master—a wise policy, inasmuch as "play-acting" in those days depended for success, not upon the "common people," and critics, as now it does, but languished unless it basked in the sunshine of Court favour.

The Court of the Star Chamber, as it has been termed, took cognizance of tobacco, and usurping, as occasionally it did, the rights of the "faithful commoners," imposed a duty upon the weed, the said duty going into his Majesty's coffers.

It seems strange to us, that at a time when colonisation was the rage, the only two novel products of the newly-discovered regions—tobacco and the potato—should have been so rigorously boycotted by those in high places; but so it was.

Again, about the time that the Petition of Rights was agitating the country, a glimpse of that Puritanical spirit, which afterwards developed into such far-fetched vagaries as close-cropped crowns, vinegar faces, biblical Christian-names, and pseudo-Joshua-like ideas anent the destruction of the Lord's enemies, might have been perceived in such regulations, interfering with the liberty of the subject, as that which prohibited teachers from being "puffers."

In spite of all its enemies, the plant flourished; literally and metaphorically it took root in the land, and we are told with regard to the former that it answered remarkably well. This is a somewhat contradictory result to that obtained in the recent experiments in tobacco culture; for, if I mistake not, the general opinion is that English-grown tobacco, although a possi-

bility, is not likely to prove a success; the glorious uncertainty of our climate, together with other causes, materially detracting from the quality and aroma. It may be that the smokers of those days were not so exacting in their demands as are the present generation; at any rate, we find that the prohibition of its culture having proved futile, the Crown, in the person of Charles the First, claimed the tobacco trade as a monopoly. He was not allowed to enjoy the proceeds for any lengthened period, for the breaking out of the Civil War deprived him of that, as of many other privileges, to some at least of which he had a far more defensible title.

Not long afterwards, the lack of money being felt by both parties, now that they were determined to fight out their quarrel to the bitter end, the Government, "de facto," imposed a duty upon Colonial tobacco, considerable quantities of which were imported; and lest there should be a loss to the revenue by native tobacco evading payment, they further imposed a prohibitive duty upon that. This excessive impost, however, failed to effect its purpose; and Cromwell's party, who by this had gained the supremacy, had no resource left but to bring in and pass a Bill prohibiting its culture in England, and appointing commissioners to see that its provisions were carried out.

A few years rolled by, and Charles the Second was restored to the throne of his fathers; but, although a change of feeling had taken place in regard to many things, there was no reaction in favour of tobacco. A still more stringent Act was passed, which authorised the destruction of all the then existing native plantations, and thus finally put a stop to tobacco culture in England.

Irish laws then, as now, were "exceptional;" but the exception in this case was in their favour, for tobacco continued to be grown in that country until early in the reign of William the Fourth—some sixty years back—when, for fiscal reasons, an Act was passed forbidding its culture even there. There is very little doubt but that, supposing tobacco were still cultivated there in large quantities, the collection of the duty which is now levied upon it—and which varies, according to the quality of the leaf, from three hundred and fifty per cent. to one thousand per cent.—would furnish a new grievance for Ireland; and, spite of "Crimes" and other such Acts, be an impossibility.

The plant is cultivated at present in most of the countries of Europe, in Asia, and in North and South America. An experiment, too, as I have above stated, has been lately made, with but qualified success, in our own country.

Smokers will be astonished to learn that there are nearly fifty varieties of the plant known to botanists; but of these only half-a-dozen or so are known to commerce.

The best known variety, and that which furnishes the bulk of the tobacco used, is the—

"*Nicotiana tabacum*," or Virginia tobacco, a handsome plant some seven or eight feet in height, with bright green leaves which are often two feet in length.

"*Nicotiana repanda*," another variety, flourishes in Cuba, and furnishes material for the manufacture of the celebrated Havana cigars.

"*Nicotiana rustica*," Turkish or Syrian, also called green tobacco, is a smaller and more hardy variety. It was this plant which was introduced and cultivated in England.

"*Nicotiana Persica*," or Shiraz tobacco, which is chiefly grown in Persia, furnishes the Orientals with that much-prized, delicate tobacco, which is associated in our minds with hookahs, and sugarless coffee.

Latakia, I may state, unlike other tobaccos, is composed of the buds and flowers in addition to the leaves of the plant. In the manufacture of ordinary tobacco the leaves only are used, and these are plucked when ripe, and dried. Different processes follow, varying according to the kind of tobacco which is being prepared. For example, the dark, rich colour and flavour of Cavendish is acquired from the leaves being sprinkled with an infusion made from the midribs, stalks, and other waste parts, after which they are allowed to ferment and dry a second time. They are next subjected to pressure in a machine, whence they issue in the form of cakes. Many lovers of the weed will be gratified to learn that at last there is a prospect of saving from the wasteful "bowl" of the Queen's pipe, that portion of the forfeited tobacco which consists of Cavendish, and of handing it over to the directors of that mission which does such excellent work amongst the fishers of the North Sea Fleet.

Cigars are manufactured in all parts of the world where tobacco is grown; mostly,

however, for home consumption. The best of all cigars are undoubtedly genuine Havanas of good brand; but Jamaica and Mexico both export considerable quantities of superior "weeds."

With regard to choosing a cigar, let the wrapper be good, with a faint gloss and a "silky" down upon its surface, let it be firmly but not too closely rolled, and, lastly, pay a fair price for it; for as to the cheap cigars which flood the market, the best advice that can be given, is summed up in the words, "touch not, taste not, handle not."

Of late years, cigarettes have become extremely fashionable, it being claimed for them that they offer the least objectionable manner of enjoying the herb. This opens out the vexed question as to the injurious effects which the use of tobacco does or does not entail, and upon which endless controversy has long been maintained. The most favourably received opinion, at least that which is most often acted upon, is that founded upon the result of a discussion which took place about twenty years back, between Sir Ranald Martin, Mr. Solly, and Dr. Ranking. Their conclusions may be briefly stated as follows: (i) tobacco is prejudicial only when used to excess; (ii) it is innocuous as compared with alcohol, and in no case worse than tea.

The matter, however, has not been finally decided; probably it never will be. Some, following in the footsteps of Salvation Yeo, attribute to tobacco virtues far beyond its merits; others enlarge upon its poisonous qualities to such a degree that one wonders, after listening to their diatribes, how it is possible for a smoker to live.

There can be no doubt that tobacco is a poison—a slow one, indeed, "almost as slow as old age," as a nonagenarian smoker lately observed—for it contains, as one of its chemical constituents, an alkaloid called nicotine, which Sir Henry Roscoe states "acts as one of the most violent poisons with which we are acquainted, a small quantity acting on the motor nerves, and producing convulsions and, afterwards, paralysis." One peculiarity, which is not commonly known, is that the more delicate the aroma, the more injurious—that is, impregnated with nicotine—is the tobacco. Why this poison has no effect upon moderate smokers, is explained by the fact that its power is diminished by its being so little concentrated.

Smokers have long claimed for tobacco the property of a disinfectant, and the jurymen who, being summoned to one of our gaols to "sit upon" the corpse of a prisoner who had died of small-pox, refused to perform their office unless provided beforehand with pipes and tobacco, had more in their favour than was commonly supposed. Dr. Tassinari, professor in the University of Pisa, as the result of experiments lately conducted by him, has shown that tobacco-smoke does possess that property, inasmuch as it retards the development of some kinds of bacteria, and, as in the case of cholera and typhus bacilli, absolutely prevents the development of others.

Whatever be its merits or its demerits, one thing is certain, namely, that there is an ever-increasing subjection to the influence of this narcotic, whose soothing powers are requisitioned to counteract the evil effects of the worry, over-pressure, and exhaustion which characterise the age in which we live.

A MAN'S FRIENDS.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

By B. DEMPSTER.

Author of "Mrs. Silas B. Bunthorp," "No," etc. etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER V.

BUT this last consciousness of Phemie was lost in the sudden rush of overwhelming emotions let loose by Mrs. Jones's coarse, simple jest. Jenkins walked back through the house, and out again to the river edge, where he stood staring down at the water as it eddied and rippled between the rushes and reeds, and caught, out in the deeper stream, strange red reflections like blood, from the setting sun. He was not thinking. His brain was too stunned by the shock of that wild tumult of feeling.

But, slowly, one distinct thought formed itself out of the chaos. He loved Phemie Day. It was incredible, preposterous, mad; but it was true. He loved the woman to whom he was about to do that horrible wrong. And then another thought was struck out clear. She cared for him. Her flushing face; the glad welcome of her greetings; the tender sympathy of her eyes that afternoon; the lingering touch of her hand—all these told him. And, as this thought sent through his

whole being a thrill of the most exquisite delight, a fierce, passionate revolt against Lethbridge stirred his soul.

Why should he think of Lethbridge's necessity? Why should not he, Jenkins, marry Phemie Day himself? Lethbridge had despised her; called her old and faded; jeered at her for being a workwoman. He had refused to save himself this way. Let him fall, then! The bond that held the two together was no longer that of friendship. Jenkins, looking back, with that hot rebellion and defiance in his heart, could not remember the time when it did exist. The more he searched, the farther back his thoughts carried him, until he was not certain that affection did not die on the night that they compassed the death of that old man. They had stuck together since; but it had been a bond of mutual interests, of old personal influences and associations. A bond cemented on Lethbridge's side by fairness of dealing—for Lethbridge had always been fair and generous to Jenkins, from the school days when he had paid him handsomely for doing work he would not have done himself. Jenkins acknowledged this, though, of late years, the two had outwardly drifted rather apart; for it was not good for Lethbridge, in his position before the eyes of the world, to seem to have dealings with a man generally known to be as unscrupulous as Jenkins. But Lethbridge had never tried to shuffle out of his obligations. And Jenkins, growing cooler, and able to acknowledge this, determined that if he married Phemie, he would deal fairly too. There would be enough in that accumulated fortune to save Lethbridge, and keep himself and Phemie in affluence all their life. Of course, there would be a breach between them, never to be healed. They would, probably, never speak to each other again. But Jenkins was not sorry. In a vague kind of way, as he thought of Phemie's pure, true eyes looking on to his own life, he began to see that it would be better for him if there were no Lethbridge and only Phemie. He fell asleep that night and dreamt of her. Beautiful dreams, almost like a foretaste of Paradise.

She was always with him; her voice sounded in his ears; he held her in his arms. But it was curious that the air seemed heavy with some powerful fragrance, which he recognised and yet could not find a name for. And once, as her lips touched his, that fragrance grew so strong, that it

oppressed and almost suffocated him, like some subtle, deadly perfume, and in his struggle for breath, he awoke. But the dream had been so vivid, that its influence still lingered, and the room seemed still faint with that strange, sweet scent. He knew it now. It was the scent of the poplars by the wicket-gate in the old school grounds.

The next morning he went to Bolton's Rents. He timed his visit about twelve, which was their dinner hour. He could not speak before Maria; but he would persuade Phemie, during that brief respite from toil, to come out and take a walk with him. That morning's work should be her very last of dreary, drudging slavery. This morning, though the sun was still pouring down hotly on the close alley and court, and the stained, defaced houses, he saw none of the disfigurements. He did not even notice the everlasting clamour of the quarrelling, playing, crying children. On the contrary, he saw all sorts of other things: a pot of scarlet bloom at one of the windows; a girl feeding her canary at another; while he half stopped to look at a chubby little urchin who smiled up at him with the face of a Greuze.

But he hurried on again, all his calmness and coolness forsaking him now, as he neared her house. He mounted the stairs, grown so familiar to him; he reached the landing with its wonderful adornments.

Mrs. Jones, as usual, was out at her daily work, and her door was closed. But a sudden mist dimmed his sight, and for a moment he could not see that other one. When the mist cleared, and with it a curious faintness of hearing, he saw that her door was ajar, and through it came sounds of a man speaking.

"Do you think that after the years I have loved you and waited to win you, that I will let you send me away, Phemie? I will not go."

"But you must!" It was Phemie who spoke, in a sweet voice, a little hoarse and strained. "Oh, Lawrence, don't torture me so! For it is torture. Do you think that if I did not love you I would send you away? I will not stand between you and this good fortune. Your uncle is sorry for the past, and sends for you, and you shall go. Do you think he would ever forgive you, if you said to him that you had taken a working woman for your wife?"

"Phemie! As if I would give you up for a hundred fortunes!"

"Ah! But you will, for I will never marry you now. I shall go away somewhere and hide myself, and pray always that you may be happy in the new life that has come to you. Oh, Lawrence!" And now she broke, for a moment, into crying, and the listener knew that she was crying on that man's breast. "It is hard! And I am not so strong as I thought I was! Some one asked me the other day if I would like to be rich! And I thought of you and of our long love! And now if I were rich I would not send you away, for you need not accept your uncle's offer. But I am poor, and a working woman, and I will never marry you! Never! But if Heaven lets us meet in eternity, and you have not forgotten me, you will find my love waiting there."

Neither here, nor in eternity. Jenkins had never thought of eternity and its issues. In his eager getting of gold, he had not had time. Now he was suddenly perfectly conscious of eternity, and the possibility of earthly loves living on into it, and through it. And this woman's love would not be his now, or for ever.

He went downstairs, out into the court and through the narrow alley, into the crowded thoroughfare beyond.

There he lost himself in the great tide of humanity, ebbing and flowing ceaselessly through night and day. Men looked at his ghostly, white face and wondered if he were ill, or were haunted by a crime. But he walked past them with always the same quiet, steady steps, and they let him go unaccompanied. It was no business of theirs. Under the burning sun, through the noise and the traffic, unheeding all, he went. Of how far he went, or where he went, he had no consciousness, though he must have turned back from somewhere at last, as he found himself in the evening outside his own office door. It was Saturday, and all his clerks had long gone home, for he was a considerate and even kind employer, and gave them the holidays he did not take himself. He let himself in with his key, and, locking himself in his own private room, remained shut up there for some hours. It was six when he entered it. He came out as a neighbouring clock struck half-past nine. He was no longer of the same ashen pallor; his eyes were quiet and keen once more. But his face had aged as if the hours since twelve had been years.

CHAPTER VI.

HE drove to Lethbridge's chambers, and found him in. He had just returned from a political dinner, and was going out again to meet the Lady Winifred Dacre at a reception she was attending that night. At Jenkins's request, he went with him into the library—the room where, a short few weeks before, they had discussed the matter of destroying the papers. Jenkins stood at the writing-table thinking of it. He had lifted a sharp, dagger-like paper-knife from the table, and was slowly and thoughtfully twisting it in his supple fingers. Something in his face, and the movement of his hands, sent a cold chill to Lethbridge's heart. But it was not physical fear.

"What brings you here to-night, Jenkins?" he asked, with an effort at a natural laugh. "I thought you were generally smoking peacefully among your roses at this hour."

"Roses! What roses!" sharply; and then he remembered that there had been roses, only a woman, with sweet, grey eyes, had carried them all away with her—so many, that she had laughingly protested as he recklessly cut down every fragrant bloom of crimson and yellow in his garden. "Oh yes, the roses," with an odd note in his voice. "But it wasn't about them that I came. I wanted to see you to-night. I feel I have made a mistake. It is too late now to go back. A man at thirty-two can't go back and take up his life on a new tack. Perhaps I wouldn't if I could; perhaps to-morrow I shall not think as I do to-day. But I shall not give myself the chance. Only, while I see the mistake, I'd like to tell you. It seems to have gone back a long way. It began before I knew you. But I can't help thinking that knowing you, ought to have made a difference. You were strong, and brave, and free, and happy, too. I never was. Of course it's a cowardly way of putting it. And I don't mean to blame you for what I am. I was a liar, a coward, a cheat, then. And I am the same now. I dare say I should always have been the same. It is only that now and then I remember odd sorts of moments—one, almost the clearest, and about the last that was of any account, was that night we fired the house—when even I, coward and liar as I was, seemed to feel as if I'd like to be something else; and they make me feel, somehow, as

if I might have been different, if my cheating and lying had been kicked out of me instead. But there, it is no use going on at that; there isn't time."

"What are you driving at, Jenkins?" exclaimed Lethbridge, with a constrained, mirthless laugh. He was wondering if Jenkins had gone mad, but felt instinctively that for himself it was something worse than madness that moved his old school-fellow.

"I have come to say that I will not destroy those papers, nor give them up to you!"

"You villain!"

Lethbridge blazed up into a perfect frenzy of rage, terror, dismay, at Jenkins's treachery.

"You fool! stand back!" and Jenkins flung off the hands that had caught at his throat. The next second he had pulled out a revolver and covered Lethbridge. "I am going to give those papers up to Phemie Day. No—I have not got them on me," as Lethbridge, with a murderous gleam in his eyes, looked as if he meant to dare the revolver, and make a spring, "and I will shoot you dead if you advance a step. You will never be able to touch them. But though you will not have all, you shall have enough to save you. I shall see to that. I came, to-night, to prepare you, and tell you what you must do. I shall take all the blame of detaining the papers. You are to know nothing of their existence. You will come out of this clean, as you have come out of every transaction in which I have had to do," with a pale, bitter smile. "Now, I have said enough to prepare you. You are to stay quiet till the end comes; and then, all you have to do is to know nothing. Whatever happens, you are safe from dishonour, though you will not have the fortune."

"Do you think me such a fool——"

"You will not follow me one step! If you attempt to, or try to detain me one moment longer now, I shoot you dead first, and blow out my brains afterwards. Then will come the exposure, and men will know you for what you are—a felon."

Still covering Lethbridge with the revolver, Jenkins retreated to the door.

Lethbridge, filled with hate and fear, with the clammy beads of moisture standing thick on his brow, had to obey. For once, Jenkins was stronger than he. A moment later he was alone. A strange

Nemesis had come to him. The weaker boy, who had been his tool, whose vices he had contemptuously made use of, when he was a schoolboy himself, had in their manhood, by his help, by his tempting, over and over again, drawn out the weaknesses and vices of his, the stronger, nature. Was not it Jenkins himself, who had suggested the burning of those papers, in such tempting colours that Lethbridge had yielded; until now it was the very desire of his soul to get possession of them? And now, at the last, when all depended on it, Jenkins had turned traitor. And yet he might have known that it would come to this. So long as he, Lethbridge, had been the highest bidder for his services, they were his; now he had gone over to the enemy.

CHAPTER VII.

JENKINS went straight down to his house near Taplow. No one was waiting up for him, for he was always thoughtful of his dependents. He was hungry and faint, for he had tasted no food since the early morning. But, after all, as he thought, it did not matter. He must have been a little light-headed, for as he opened his study door, the room seemed full of the scent of the poplars.

He closed the door gently, and going over to the table, put out the light that was burning on it. Then he drew up the blinds and looked out. There was no moon; but the far-off stars shone down passionless, watchful, on the hushed earth. He stood for a moment vaguely thinking how very quiet it all was. Then he roused himself with a long-drawn breath like a man striving against the sleep that is stealing over him.

"Good-bye, Phemie," he said, turning away from the stars and the quiet trees, and silent, sleeping earth-life.

They found him, in the morning, quite

dead. The doctor said he must have been dead an hour or two. There was no need to enquire into the cause of his death. That faint, unmistakable odour of prussic acid was the witness.

The first post that morning brought Phemie Day a letter, dated from the night before. It was from Jenkins. No one ever saw that letter but herself. But it moved her terribly. She went straight down to his office, as one of the directions in his letter ordered, and there she heard the news of his death.

The chief clerk had also found a letter awaiting him, when he arrived in the morning, acquainting him with the fact that Miss Day would call, and giving him instructions concerning the papers.

These papers proved her to be the missing heiress of Jonathan Day. Before the year was over, she was a rich woman, and married to the love of her life.

She dealt most generously by Lethbridge. In Jenkins's letter to her, he had stated, without betraying his sins, that Lethbridge was terribly in need of assistance, and that speedily. He left the matter in her hands. He knew what manner of woman she was, and she did not betray his trust. She and Lethbridge, as connections, became, outwardly, fairly good friends. Inwardly, she never could conquer a prejudice she had against him. A prejudice at which her husband laughed, he, too, sharing the popular opinion that Lethbridge was "a fine fellow."

Lethbridge, also, inherited all Jenkins's property. The latter having, some years before, made his will in his favour. He did not wish any of his own relations, who had treated him so harshly in his youth, to have it, and he had no one else but Lethbridge to leave it to. By help of this, and Phemie's splendid gift, Lethbridge tided over the difficulties which had so nearly taken another name.

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CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Consett," etc.*

CHAPTER XIV. INFATUATION.

I WENT back to Mrs. Cray's with a very heavy heart.

Of course I saw how it all had come about, only too plainly. The mutual attraction of that first meeting; the sympathy and suitability of the two young, impulsive, romantic natures. There had been no thought of danger to either—at first. There never is, or there would be no unhappy love stories in the world for poets to write of, and sentimental folk to weep over.

That slow, subtle drifting, with closed eyes and unconscious hearts, up to the danger point, where temptation, and pain, and misery set in. How often, how often I have seen it! In more cases, perhaps, than friends or foes ever dreamt; in more cases than husbands or wives themselves suspected. For human nature is terribly human, despite restraints, artifices, and conventionalities.

It is not always the mournful face that hides the heaviest heart. Sometimes, when lips were laughing, I have watched the eyes, and I think tears would have seemed less sad than the look I have seen. I have wondered what the history was that was hidden from the world; what brought the sudden tremor to lip and hand; the sudden pallor to bronzed cheek of man, or fair, flushed face of woman.

With gay words, and fashionable jargon, and indifferent laughter, and careless, cynical philosophy, the men and women of

the world play their part; yet here and there one notes the weariness, languor, and disgust underlying the jest and the philosophy; and, in so noting them, one can but wonder why they should deem it worth while to act and pretend, and be untrue to themselves for the sake of a society their better natures must despise. It is a mystery indeed.

Mrs. Cray was at home when I went in, and apparently not in the best of temper. She put a few questions to me, which I answered very shortly. I had no idea of telling her about Mr. Tresyllion, or what I had seen and suspected.

That night she told me she was going to write, and sent me off to bed as usual. I was so worried about Miss Kate that I could not sleep. I tossed to and fro, and my head began to ache as if it would burst, and at last, in despair, I got up and resolved to go down to the kitchen and make myself some tea. I heard the hall clock strike twelve as I went softly down the stairs, and past the dining-room door.

I thought I would knock and tell Mrs. Cray that I was about the house, in case she should be alarmed at the noise; but as I paused there on the mat a sound startled me, and my hand dropped.

It was the sound of a champagne cork flying off. Then a voice—Rex Tresyllion's voice—fell on my ear.

"Give me a tumblerful, Pauline. I'm nearly dead with worries and vexations. I need something to pull me together."

I was too amazed to move—Rex Tresyllion here, at this hour, alone with Mrs. Cray!

"Well!" I thought, "this is Bohemianism with a vengeance!"

I suppose I am neither better nor worse than most of my sex, if I confess to the

humiliating fault of curiosity. For the first time in my life I was guilty of the meanness of listening.

Mrs. Oray's voice answered him. "My poor boy—and what has worried you? Won't you tell me?"

"Oh," he said, "it wouldn't interest you. Never mind, Pauline. I came to you because you always rest and comfort me. You are the only woman I know, who does that."

There was a moment's pause. Then she said in a hoarse, choked voice: "I wish to Heaven, Rex, that I could take every care and trouble in the world off your shoulders and bear them for you! I would do it gladly—for your sake."

A sob seemed to break her voice. I think she must have left her seat and thrown herself down by his chair.

"Oh, Rex, Rex!" she cried, passionately. "I can't help it—I can't bear it any longer. I must speak or I shall die. Didn't you see what your words—your looks were doing? Scorching my heart with a very madness of passionate love, destroying all the peace and content of my life! I tried to live it down; to stamp it out. I might as well try to forget I live, and suffer."

"Good Heavens, Pauline!" he cried. "Are you mad?"

"Perhaps"—she said. "But you shall hear me, you must. Why have you come here as you did?—sought me, flattered me, tortured me? Did you think you were the sort of man that a woman could only care for in the cold sense that friendship means? You have taught me one lesson, that life, and experience, and my world had failed to teach, and if you hate me, or despise me after to-night, I cannot help it. Your presence is like life to me. Your very step in the street, your voice on the stairs will make my sick heart throb, live, rejoice! Oh, Rex, you knew, you saw—you are not so blind that it needed words like—these."

"No," he said. "I saw—I know. For Heaven's sake, Pauline, get up. Why should you kneel to me. I am not worth any woman's love, and yet you care—you care so much."

"More than my life," she said.

In the stillness came one deep sob—a stifled murmur. I was cold as ice.

"Say you don't despise me," she went on, passionately. "Say it, Rex, or, as I live, I will not wait to see another sun rise on the shame and sorrow of my wretched life."

He may have argued with her, or accepted that homage to his vanity at cost of mutual self-respect. I don't know; and I cannot say. I only remember that I crept away, sick at heart with shame, and shut myself in my own little attic, and thought, "Is the world all mad; are women all fools; has life no better thing in it than this love, for which they are wrecking themselves, and all good gifts which they may possess?" "Oh, Miss Kate!" I said to myself again and again, "oh, my dear! what an escape for you; what a blessing for you that in time you had the strength to see your danger. He is utterly, utterly worthless."

For, indeed, so it seemed to me, knowing nothing, as I did then, of that strange sense of honour which sometimes makes a man refrain from humiliating a woman too deeply; which, for sake of the love he has won unsought, will make him as chivalrous as if that love were a guerdon, not a shame; which rends his heart with pity as the whirlwind of the weaker creature's passion rocks him in its frenzied blast, and so leads him on to pretend the love she has never awakened, and to suffer the ignominy and despair she never suspects.

But other lessons and other experiences had to teach me that. On this night I blamed him as much as I hated him; and I only longed to know Miss Kate was safe out of his reach or knowledge, and resolved to tell her what he really was, if only to cure her of her folly in time.

Mrs. Oray had the grace to keep her room all next day. I saw and heard nothing of her till the evening, and then, after preparing her usual meal, I told her that the place did not suit me, and that I must leave her service.

She looked very much astonished and put out, and argued with me for ever so long. But I was quite firm; my mind was made up, and I kept to my resolution.

That night's post brought me a letter from Miss Kate, saying that she was leaving for Devonshire next day.

Oh, how glad I was to hear it! How proudly I told myself that she, at least, was safe, and that time would heal the smart, and that she would be her bright, merry little self again!

Ah me! as if fate ever did what we expect and desire; as if it does not blind us first to danger, and then let loose all possible risks and temptations across the path on which our feet are set.

The whole of that month, my last month with Mrs. Cray, I did not once set eyes on Mr. Tresyllion. But I knew he came there, for all that; and I knew, too, that the new book got on very, very slowly for all the hours that were supposed to be given up to it. Now and then she would dash off fragments of ideas and thoughts as mad as herself, I think. I used to pick up scraps of paper in her bedroom, or the dining-room, with the oddest things written on them. I give a few here :

"How little women understand men when they try to rule them. . . . As if the strongest bond is not the one that is never seen."

"To bore a man, is to give the death-blow to his love. Never let him feel you exact anything—only that he is yielding, not that you are compelling."

"The art of knowing when 'to let men alone' is the one art that seems impossible to women who love them. There is just a point to which passion may be led without straining. . . . Never reproach your lover when he is irritable or weary. Never implore him when his impulse does not answer the prayer of your eyes. To know when to caress is as necessary to love, as to know when to be silent is necessary to true comradeship."

"The passion of jealousy is a descent into depths of humiliation. Be jealous, but never betray it to the rival who excites it, or to the man whose love you crave, or possess, or would keep."

"When a man fears to tell you of any trouble, any folly, any mistake, his love is on the wane. Withheld confidence is a spur that goads conscience, and irritates him into further wrong-doing for mere desire of forgetfulness. Love is too sharp-set not to be easily blunted; the edge may be set again, but it is never quite the same—clear, polished, unmarked by the grindstone of circumstance."

"Misery is the spur that goads passion; comfort the leading rein that guides love. Do not blame; do not reproach; do not seek to detach your lover from habits, tasks, and inclinations, which are to him as second nature. It may be easy to win, it is hard to hold. When you have learned that secret, love has nothing more to teach."

"Let a man once feel that he can come to

a woman for sympathy as well as love, for comprehension as well as sympathy, for companionship in his good or bad moods, for laughter as for tears, for sorrow as for joy, for stimulus as for soothing, for passion as for content, and he will ask no more save to rest on her heart, and love, and be loved."

I used to wonder she did not publish all this in a little volume, and call it, "Pauline Cray's Philosophy of Love." I am sure it would have had a wide circulation, and done an immense amount of good, besides initiating the inexperienced.

I suppose she was happy at this time. I don't know. She never said a word to me, and I suppose never dreamt that I suspected what was going on.

I think she was as absolutely, madly, blindly infatuated as ever woman was. Yet she was clever enough to keep her charm for him, even after that humiliating self-betrayal. She grew positively beautiful at times, as if the fire in her heart had lent her youth, charm, brilliance.

I looked at her with a sort of wonder on those evenings when I knew she expected him, wondering if, indeed, she could be the same woman—careless, slovenly, erratic—into whose service I had entered a brief twelve months before.

I suppose there is a sorcery about love that is quite beyond explaining. It certainly seems to me that it is the one strong ungovernable passion, on which human lives are wrecked; so wantonly, so carelessly, so irrationally, that one can but hold one's breath and gaze in stupefied wonder and ask—"Why?"

But I did not call Mrs. Cray's infatuation "love." It seemed to me a hot, cruel caprice that had fastened on this man from the first hour his handsome, laughing, boyish face had looked back to hers, on that fatal Sunday night.

Mrs. Cray had often said that she was fond of discerning and analysing character, though whether she had formed a correct judgement it is not for me to say. She was quite clever enough to know something about the world she lived in, and the life she described.

When one knows the world, one ceases to expect miracles from the men and women who make it what it is.

Self-sacrifice is only possible to a great nature. Mrs. Cray's was not that by any manner of means; but I had no right to sit in judgement upon her, no right to hint

even at her folly, or the lengths to which it might lead her.

I left her at the end of the month to go to a place I had heard of, in the country, as housekeeper to a doctor.

We parted very good friends. Perhaps she was relieved to think I was going away. I don't know, but I could not help thinking it as I saw her eyes fall before mine when I mentioned her husband's name. And, really, I felt as if I were leaving a mine with the train laid for explosion, and only the match wanted, as I drove off from the little house in Bruton Street.

CHAPTER XV. "THE PITY OF IT!"

I HAD written to Miss Kate telling her that I was leaving Mrs. Cray's and had found another situation, and she wrote back to ask me to come to Templecombe for a few days, before going to the new place.

I therefore travelled down to Devonshire, glad enough of the excuse to see my pretty darling again, and wondering, all the long journey through, whether I should find her in better spirits.

I had never seen her married home, and was surprised to find what a grand and beautiful place it was. I had tea in the servants' hall when I arrived, and did not see Miss Kate until after the late dinner, when a message was brought me to go to her in the boudoir.

It was such a pretty, dainty room—the very setting for its dainty, little mistress; but as the door opened, and I went in, and she rose to greet me, I felt a sort of shock and terror at the change I saw in her.

She was dressed in white: something loose, and soft, and fleecy, and with no particle of colour about her, and her face seemed to have grown terribly thin and pale, and there were dark lines under the soft, brown eyes that made them look strangely sad and wistful.

"Well, Jane!" she said, quite cheerfully, and smiled up at me.

Now, whether it was the smile, or the look, or the effort that made both so infinitely pathetic, I don't know; but I felt the tears rush into my eyes and nearly blind me as I took both the little outstretched hands in mine.

"Have you been ill, Miss Kate?" I cried, involuntarily.

"Do I look ill?" she said, and glanced at the mirror opposite. "Oh, no. I am

quite well, really. The—the season has fagged me a little, that is all, and I haven't had time to recoup myself after such unusual dissipation. Come and sit down and talk to me. You are going to another situation, you said. What a restless old Jane it is."

She pushed forward a chair, and sank into another by the bay-window, which was wide open, and showed the beautiful grounds and the sloping terraces, and the moonlight gleaming softly over the quiet trees.

I sat down opposite to her as she bade me. The room was dimly lit by one lamp on a table at the other end. Her delicate face and head were thrown into faint relief, and seemed to me to have something almost unreal about them.

For a moment or two I could not speak, only sat quietly watching her, and at last she turned to me with a poor little effort at a smile, which soon died away.

"Why have you left Mrs. Cray?" she said.

For the life of me I could not help starting. I had forgotten that she would be almost sure to ask that question, and I could not tell her the truth. I felt my face grow warm, but the friendly darkness doubtless concealed it.

"I—I was not comfortable," I said. "She is such a strange woman, turning night into day as she does."

"Is she—is she a good woman, do you think?" Miss Kate asked suddenly.

Her voice was not steady, and the little hands that lay loosely clasped on her lap, trembled visibly.

"What do you mean by a—good woman?" I said.

"Is she true and honourable? Would she be a safe friend for—for a man?"

"That," I said, somewhat dryly, "depends very much on the man. If he were young, handsome, clever, erratic—"

She raised one trembling hand to her face, and half turned from me towards the open window.

"Don't let us talk about it," she said, almost fiercely. "What good can it do? And yet— Oh, Jane, Jane!" she burst out, passionately, and threw herself on her knees by my side, and hid her face on my lap. "I sent for you," she said, "because it seemed as if I would die if I didn't hear something—something. Tell me—you have seen him since—since that day? Is he well—happy? Do you think he ever remembers—"

"Oh, Miss Kate!" I said. "You must not—indeed you must not think of him like this. Believe me, he is not worth it. He was only amusing himself with you; he is a selfish, unprincipled man. Even if he were not, what good would it be now?"

She sprang to her feet as suddenly as she had thrown herself down, her small hands clasped tight, her eyes flashing and glowing in the dusky gloom.

"Say that again," she said, hoarsely; "say that again. 'Amusing himself with me!'—Is it true, Jane? By Heaven above, if I thought so——"

"Oh, hush, hush!" I cried, horrified at the passion I had evoked. "Be calm, Miss Kate, for Heaven's sake! Sit down there as you were doing, and I will tell you the whole story. I never meant to do so; but it is better. It will cure you of wasting thoughts and feeling on a worthless man."

There was agony in the dark eyes that rested on my face—the agony of a creature that awaits its death blow. But I only thought then of the sharp pain that would prove its own best cure, and I looked away from her to the dark, still night and the heavy shadows, where the moonlight gleamed from time to time.

"I said it, my dear, because I know it to be true," I answered her at last. "He is evidently a man who spends his spare time in making love to married women. The evening of that very afternoon, you remember——?"

"Yes," she said, in a strange, hushed voice.

"He came to—to Mrs. Cray's," I said. "It was late. I had gone to bed; but I had to get up about midnight, and go downstairs for something. As I passed the dining-room door, I heard them talking."

"You—you are sure," she cried, sharply, "it was he—Rex?"

"Quite, quite sure. She called him by his name, and I know his voice so well. He was there so often."

"Yes," she said in the same stifled way, "I know; he told me so himself."

"Well," I went on ruthlessly, "I heard enough to convince me that Mrs. Cray allowed him to make love to her. That he, on his side, knew she was in love with him."

There was a moment's dead silence. I was terrified as I looked at her face. The agony, the shame, the horror, the disgust that swept over it. She rose and stood leaning against the window, her hand

clasping the silken curtains as if to support herself.

"To think," she said in a husky, stifled voice, "that I—I—should live to suffer for a man's amusement."

I rose, too, but I did not dare to touch her. I was afraid. I stood there silent, waiting for the storm to pass; hoping and praying it might pass in a tempest of tears and sobs, as so often I had known her varying moods to do.

But no. She turned to me at last—white—cold—still.

"Thank you, Jane," she said. "I suppose it is the truth you have told me—not something cruel and disagreeable, 'for my good,' as you used to say of the powders you were so fond of giving me."

"Miss Kate," I said, "it is gospel truth as sure as I live."

She held up her hand to stay further words; then it dropped, and was pressed convulsively to her heart.

"I am rightly served," she said. "I deserve no one's pity—even my own. I—I had no excuse, save that I never dreamt of danger until it was too late. But, oh! how I hate him—hate him! I feel as if I could not breathe, live, exist, in the same world where he is now. I feel——" She broke off abruptly; a strange, fierce little laugh, rang out on the stillness. "Jane," she cried, and her hand closed on my own like a vice, "if my turn ever comes, if a day ever dawns that tells me I can deal back the suffering and humiliation dealt to me, what a revenge I will take for to-night!"

"Oh, Miss Kate," I cried, "Miss Kate, don't talk so wickedly!"

"Am I—wicked?" she said, suddenly; and her strength seemed to go, and she sank back in her chair, and looked at me in a stricken, helpless way. "I suppose I am," she said. "I ought to have no such feelings—no such thoughts. I ought to have remembered who I was—that romance and sentiment died for me at the altar, where John Carruthers made me his wife. I ought—but I could not help myself. Before I cared, I never knew my danger; afterwards—it was very little use."

She hid her face in her hands; her whole frame shook with a shiver as of mortal cold.

"We will not speak of this again," she said presently. "Never again, after to-night. I will go back to duty. Surely, it can't be very hard to be content when one has so much in life to make one so. I was

quite happy two months ago, Jane. Quite happy, before this wretched, feverish, restless excitement took possession of me."

"And you will be quite happy again, my dear," I said, gently. "Believe me, you will. Far, far happier than if you knew the—the feeling was mutual. Far happier than Mrs. Cray. I am sure she cannot be happy."

"Not happy!"—It was a new mood now that swayed the passionate, impulsive little heart.—"Not happy, and his eyes are looking back to hers, and his voice telling her he loves her—and his lips——"

A great flame of colour swept up to her brow. "Why," she went on tempestuously, "I would have died willingly, only once to hear him say he loved me; only once to have felt the touch of his lips on mine."

"Oh, Miss Kate," I cried in horror, "you must not talk like this. You must not. For Heaven's sake, remember——"

"I can remember nothing," she said, fiercely, "until I have worked the mad fit out of me; so let me be, Jane, and if I shock you too much, go down to the servants' hall again."

"Well," I sighed, despairingly, "whatever there is in Mr. Tresyllion for two sensible woman to go mad about, beats my powers of comprehension."

"Oh," she said, growing suddenly calm, "my madness will be brief, believe me. It is when I grow sane that I am to be feared."

"Miss Kate," I cried, imploringly, "have you no thought how foolish this is, how wrong?"

"Wrong!"—It was the tempest breaking loose again—"wrong, do you say? As if I hadn't told myself that a million times, and as if that boy's blue eyes hadn't swept away the memory of the telling at the very next glance. As if I didn't know the full extent of my folly—that I am a wife, a mother, a woman who should have done with dreams, and desires, and all that means the poetry of life, and youth, and makes earth heaven! Oh, Jane, what is the use—what is the use—what is the use? I can't help myself. It must be driven out somehow, I know; but you must give me time, Jane; you must give—me—time——"

And then suddenly she swayed forward, and, with closed eyes, fell like a stone on the floor at my feet.

VEGETARIAN DINNERS.

CONFRONTED by the accessories of the great Christmas festival; the cattle show, the congress of animals doomed for slaughter at the great cattle markets; the display of meat at the butchers' shops; the poulterers' windows crammed with all kinds of fowl and game; in the face of all this evidence of our present way of living, how is it possible to anticipate any general conversion to the principles of a vegetarian diet? The world must change a good deal ere such a consummation can be reached. But to this it might be replied that the world has changed, and is now changing with a rapidity that sets all calculations based upon the sleepy annals of the past at defiance. Old and settled habits go down like ninepins before the impact of new ideas, and once deeply-rooted convictions are torn up and scattered to the winds. Shall our English roast beef be brought down from its pride of place, and our plum-pudding, deprived of its suet, be reduced to its ancient condition of "porridge"? Shall the ox and the sheep become merely natural curiosities, exhibited at zoological gardens, where all the carnivora, declining porridge, have perished of inanition, and only harmless, sleek, herbivorous creatures are allowed to appear?

All this savours of Utopia, and yet there is an excellent and useful society which is pushing forward in this direction, and has its own press organ, and a considerable number of adherents. The Vegetarian Society does not, indeed, prescribe an exclusively vegetable diet. Its members undertake to abstain from fish, flesh, and fowl; but they do not renounce milk and its products, or eggs. These exceptions, however, are regarded by the rigid vegetarian as base concessions to human weakness. A strict professor, indeed, looks upon many even vegetable products with suspicion. "Bread may be allowed," writes one; but, evidently, he has his doubts about bread. For is not bread fermented?

So we are reduced to the ascetic dietary of Friar Tuck, without the venison pasty in reserve, something mild in pulse, or parched peas, which may be reduced to a paste for the sake of weak stomachs, moistened with draughts of water from the spring, or, more prosaically, from the tap.

But every school has its extreme disciples; and, after all, the vegetarian pro-

gramme in its milder form is not without attractive features. Many who are far from being converts to the vegetarian theory, will admit that our staple diet is too exclusively based on animal food, and that we consume—those of us who are not constrained to abstinence by hard necessity—an undue quantity of too solid flesh. But even here a wholesome change is in progress. The abundance and excellence of our vegetable supply far outstrips the growth of the trade in meat, and many vegetables are becoming articles of daily consumption with all classes which formerly were almost unknown. There are tomatoes, for example, once only met with in the form of an occasional adjunct to mutton cutlets—chops and tomato sauce—of which the fame has gone through all the world, in the case of Bardell and Pickwick. But who would have thought, in days not very remote, of eating the sauce without the chops? Yet in the tomato season costermongers' barrows are now loaded with this beautiful fruit, which finds ready sale among the humblest quarters.

Great, too, are the resources which the vegetable-markets place at our disposal. There is celery, of which cart-loads might have recently been seen, disposed of in back streets at a halfpenny a root; and what can be more delicious and wholesome than a dish of stewed celery with appropriate sauce? And as for sauce, with a tablespoonful of cream—now to be had close by everybody's door—and a morsel of butter melted in it, and pepper and salt, you have a sauce that is hardly to be beaten for any kind of fresh vegetable. The leak, too, treated in the same way, or served up on toast like asparagus, is to many palates more acceptable than even the latter dainty. But the true flavour of a dish of vegetables can only be appreciated when it is eaten as a separate dish; treated in our usual insular way, as mere adjuncts to entrées or joint, our vegetables lose half their value. But here the culinary art comes in, for vegetables cannot be made palatable as distinct dishes without good cookery. How much, too, a skilful cook can make out of a purée of good vegetables! And in the way of vegetable-soups there is abundant scope for all his or her talents; for in flavour and bouquet the various fresh and dried vegetables at the command of the cook are of almost inexhaustible variety. Less satisfactory are those soups which are thickened with tapioca or similar sub-

stances, and which assume a false air of being "grasse;" but they are greater favourites on that account with the general public.

For those who incline to vegetarianism, pure and simple, there is an abundant literature provided by the society. There are leaflets, pamphlets, brochures, books of more solid pretensions. "How to Begin," is the title of one of the leaflets, which seems to imply something of a wrench at starting. Then you have receipt-books of all kinds, and cookery-books, varying in price from a penny to several shillings. Thus we have "Three hundred and sixty-six vegetable menus, showing how we may dine for a year and a day, without resorting to butcher or poulterer;" and these are framed apparently on the more liberal scale sanctioned by the society. But here is a text-book of the strictest sect: "The Hygeian Home Cook-book, without Eggs, Milk, Butter, or Condiments." Or we may learn "How to Live on Sixpence a Day;" or, improving even upon this rigid model, "How to Live on a Shilling a Week;" or, again, in more general terms, "How to Live in the Street called Straight, a Book for Hard Times," assuredly a very seasonable volume, if it answers to its title.

But there is another great school of vegetarianism, attendance at which is compulsory, and which embraces a great majority of those working at poorly-paid employments; families who work hard at home from morning to night for a bare subsistence, and live, for the most part, on tea and bread, with the occasional luxury of butter. With such, however, vegetarianism is not much valued on its own account, and a bloater, or a "kipper," or, perhaps, a smoked haddock would be more valued than a dish of vegetables, however succulent. And it may be doubted whether the majority of vegetarian receipts, which mostly involve some delicate manipulation, and the employment of stew-pans, hair-sieves, and more or less elaborate apparatus, are altogether adapted for the homes of the poor.

It is rather for people who have means, however limited, with tranquil minds, and no great steep of work, or worry, upon their shoulders, that vegetarianism seems best fitted. But an occasional experiment of such a diet will do anybody good. Let us turn from the flesh pots of Egypt, every now and then, and make our way to a vegetarian restaurant. London has many

such establishments, and they are to be found in most of our chief cities, Manchester being, after London, the most abundantly supplied with vegetarian dining-rooms. In London these restaurants are now to be found in every quarter of the town, and the names they assume pleasantly recall, in their fashion, those of the coffee-houses of the last century, where so much of the wit, and fashion, and learning of the town used to congregate. There is the "Apple Tree"—indeed, there are two of them—within the City precincts. The "Orange Grove," in Saint Martin's Lane, "The Porridge Bowl," in Holborn; "The Rose," Finsbury way; "The Waverley," in the Borough; and, not far from Oxford Street, the "Wheataheaf." In a general way there is an air of neatness and propriety about these establishments. You have tables topped with marble, or covered with snow-white cloths, artistic fittings, neat and generally nice-looking girls to wait upon you. Here are no clinging odours of departed joints, no stains of congealed gravy, nor is there the feverish clamour and clatter of a dining tavern in full swing. An air of decorous calm pervades the saloon, for anything like ferocious hunger is out of place in a vegetarian restaurant. A calm examination of the menu shows various soups at your disposal; some of which are of a savoury and nutritious character—a julienne soup, or *maigre*, is not at all bad, and gives a distinct impression of having commenced to dine. But it requires a little training to relish rice milk as a preliminary to a mid-day meal, and when it comes to porridge, which is even more in demand than soup by the regular habitués of the place, it strikes you that the taste for porridge in such a connection is an acquired one.

Yet porridge is one of the mainstays of the vegetarian régime, and a choice is afforded of sundry kinds. We may have maize mash and wheaten porridge; but the *pièce de résistance* is, naturally, the Scotch oatmeal. Scotchmen, indeed, seem less devoted than might be expected to their own historic diet, and are often found to consider it as merely a foundation on which to rear a superstructure of more substantial and stimulating fare. But in oatmeal, no doubt, we have a food substance of great value. It comes to us with a fine record of its own. What a race of men it has reared and nourished; what marches have been made, what battles fought, when the clansman, whether High-

lander or Borderer, was furnished with a bag of coarse oatmeal for all his supplies! It is food both for babes and strong men; but for the intermediate class—those who have survived infancy, but are not gifted with strong digestions—well, of these, every one must be guided by his own experience. But what an advantage has a man, who can thrive on such homely fare, over one who cannot move without his *batterie de cuisine*, his cooks and servitors; for surely he, whose needs are small, is almost independent of Fortune, and can await the turn of her wheel with a mind at ease.

But when the porridge or potage has been disposed of, the question of what is to follow presents a sudden and puzzling interest. Perhaps the menu contains a vegetable goose, which you shrewdly suspect to be the stuffing, minus the bird; or you are promised a lentil outlet with tomato sauce; or, perhaps, steak-pie in a vegetable form, that makes you wonder whether there is such a thing as a beef-steak-tree, and if not, by what cunning alchemy the flavour of a rump-steak can be got out of pot herbs. Macaroni, in various forms, is always in favour; but that suggests the alarming reflection—for which Peter Parley is, perhaps, originally responsible—that the macaroni-eating *lazzaroni* of Naples are the very laziest of human creatures. Now, if this characteristic of theirs be due to what they eat, what a misfortune to fortify one's natural indolence by such a diet.

When it comes to the sweets we are on familiar ground. There are few things in tarts and puddings which cannot be made on vegetarian principles, that is, with the liberal allowance made by the association of such products of the farm and dairy as are not in the nature of flesh. Suet, of course, is not allowed; but even a plum-pudding may be made without suet, and, when we reflect that our Christmas pudding was, in origin, a plum porridge, made, probably, of boiled wheat sweetened and spiced, and with raisins of Corinth and raisins of the sun added thereto, it is likely that the vegetarian article more nearly resembles the early plum-pudding than does the ordinary article.

So far, our meal of soup, *entrée*, and sweets has only cost ninepence. It has been eaten among pleasant surroundings, served with neatness and despatch, and has certainly satisfied the cravings of hunger in a satisfactory way. We should find

much the same fare at a vegetarian table d'hôte such as is held at the new vegetarian hotel near the Strand, for sixpence. Such a dinner might not satisfy a Dandie Dinmont, or be held of much account in Liddiesdale; but for Londoners, who live "chichement," like the fox in the fable, nothing can be better adapted. If we have no heroic labours to perform, why should we live heroically? Let us take our dinner of herbs and be content.

SOME TESTAMENTARY CURIOS.

THE whims and vagaries of testators seem to be of an endless variety. They have become proverbial. Almost daily we may notice paragraphs detailing bequests of a more or less extraordinary nature; and latterly the United States would appear to have been more prolific than other regions of singular wills. Quite recently, the late Lord Newborough made the following curious provision in his will. He gave most explicit directions that, after a certain period elapses, his body is to be exhumed and re-interred in Bardsey Island. This island, it will be remembered, lies to the north of Cardigan Bay, and is reputed to have had no fewer than twenty thousand saints buried in its soil.

Only the other day, too, Henry Eberle, of Frankfort, left an estate valued at twenty-five thousand dollars to be expended in the erection of a monument over his grave. His will was executed in 1869, and gives minute instructions as to the monument. Three shares of the cemetery stock are bequeathed to the Cemetery Company, the income upon which is to maintain the monument in good repair.

A far more extraordinary will than either of the above, was, however, made by Solomon Sanborn, of Medford, Massachusetts, who was a hatter by trade. He left his body to the late Professor Agassiz and Dr. O. W. Holmes, to be by them prepared in the most skilful and scientific manner known to anatomical art, and placed in the anatomical museum of Harvard College. Two drumheads were to be made of the skin. Upon one was to be inscribed Alexander Pope's "Universal Prayer," on the other, the "Declaration of Independence"; and then they were to be presented to the testator's "distinguished friend," the drummer of Cohasset. This presentation was subject to the condition that on the seventeenth of June, at

sunrise, every year, the drummer should beat upon the drumheads at the foot of Bunker's Hill, the spirit-stirring strains of "Yankee Doodle."

Another American, who died within the last few months, reflects in his will that he was shunned by his relatives, "who cannot, now that I am dying, do too much for my comfort." But Dr. Wagner takes on these relations a ghastly revenge. To his brother, Napoleon Bonaparte, he bequeaths his left arm and hand; to another brother, George Washington, his right arm and hand; and to others his legs, nose, ears, etc. Further, the testator leaves one thousand dollars for the dismembering of his body.

Among other testators who have displayed this remarkable tendency to leave legacies in the form of portions of their bodily frames, or the frame in its entire condition, may be instanced Dr. Ellerby and Jeremy Bentham.

The will of Dr. Ellerby, who died in London, in 1827, contained the following bequests: "I bequeath my heart to Mr. W., anatomist; my lungs to Mr. R.; and my brain to Mr. F., in order that they may preserve them from decomposition; and I further declare that if these gentlemen shall fail faithfully to execute these my last wishes in this respect, I will come and torment them until they shall comply."

In spite of this threat, however, the beneficiaries declined their legacies.

Jeremy Bentham, again, bequeathed his body to a hospital, with instructions that his skeleton should be prepared and cleaned, and his head preserved entire, and that he should—when thus treated—preside at the meetings of the hospital directors. Whether he was ever made to actually preside is doubtful; but it is certain that the skeleton was preserved, and may now be seen in the hospital museum. The preservation of the head was, however, blundered, and one of wax had to be substituted.

Many wills have references to the domestic felicity, or the reverse, experienced by those who executed them. As an example of the former, we may give the following passage from the settlement of Lady Palmerston, an ancestress of the celebrated Premier. Referring to her husband, she says, "As I have long given you my heart, and my tenderest affections and fondest wishes have always been yours, so is everything else that I possess; and all that I can call mine being already yours, I

have nothing to give but my heartiest thanks for the care and kindness you have, at any time, shown me, either in sickness or in health, for which God Almighty will, I hope, reward you in a better world." Then, for "form's sake," follow several specific bequests.

As a specimen of the opposite sort, we may first of all instance the will of Mr. Rogers, of Dublin. In April, 1888, Mrs. Rogers disputed her husband's will in the Dublin Probate Court, on the ground of his deficiency of testamentary capacity. The will contained the clause: "In consequence of the ill-behaviour and bad conduct of my wife, I cut her off with one shilling, and she is not to have either hand, act, or part in the management, supporting or educating of my children." The evidence showed that the deceased was jealous of his spouse, who at the time of the marriage was eighteen years of age, while he was seventy. The Jury found a verdict establishing the will. Henry, Earl of Stafford, again, inserted the following in his testamentary disposition: "I give to the worst of women, who is guilty of all ills—the daughter of Mr. Grammont, a Frenchman—whom I have unfortunately married, five and forty brass half-pence, which will buy her a pullet for her supper—a greater sum than her father can often make over to her—for I have known when he had neither money, nor credit, for such a purchase, he being the worst of men and his wife the worst of women in all debaucheries. Had I known their characters I had never married their daughter, nor made myself unhappy."

Another gentleman bequeathed to the partner of his joys and sorrows his "bitter contempt for her infamous conduct;" and a Colonel Nash made the subjoined provisions. He bequeathed an annuity of fifty pounds to the bell-ringers of Bath Abbey, on the condition that they should muffle the clappers of the bells of the said Abbey, and ring them with doleful accentuation from eight a.m. to eight p.m. on each anniversary of his wedding day; and, during the same number of hours only, with a merry peal on the anniversary of the day which released him from domestic tyranny and wretchedness. A Mr. Luke of Rotheringham, who died in 1812, also left bell-ringers legacies, though under different circumstances. His will is a most extraordinary document. He left a penny to every child who should attend his obsequies, with the result that over

seven hundred youngsters were in attendance at the funeral. All the poor women in the parish were bequeathed one shilling each. The bell-ringers were left half-a-guinea each "to strike off one peal of grand bobs" at the exact moment the body was interred; and seven of the oldest navvies were to have a guinea for "puddling him up" in his grave. An old woman, "who had for eleven years tucked him up in his bed," was to have one guinea. A singular endowment was made, whereby forty dozen penny leaves were to be thrown down from the parish church steeple, at noon, every Christmas Day for ever.

A German bequeathed his effects to a poor man, whom he intensely disliked, on condition that he always wore linen underclothes without any additional underclothing; while John Reed, the gas-lighter of the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, concluded his will thus: "My head to be separated from my body, duly macerated and prepared, then to be employed to represent the skull of Yorick in the play of Hamlet." Stanislaus Poltmarz left the greater part of his fortune to a Hungarian notary, forbidding him, however, to take possession until he had sung in La Scala or San Carlo opera houses the parts of Rossini's "Otello" and "Elviro" in "Son-nambula." He was eighty years old when he executed the will and wrote: "I do not dispose of my wealth in this manner for the sake of being thought original; but having been present four years ago at an evening party in Vienna, I heard Mr. Lotz (the notary) sing a cavatina from each of the operas with a beautiful tenor voice, therefore I believe him likely to become an excellent artist. In any case, if the public hisses him, he can console himself easily with the three million florins which I leave him."

In 1805, Mr. Edward Hurst left a very large fortune to his only son on condition that the latter should seek out and marry a young lady whom the father, according to his own statement, had, by acts for which he prayed forgiveness, reduced to the extremity of poverty; or, failing her, her nearest unmarried female heir. The latter, by the irony of fate, turned out to be a spinster of fifty-five, who, professing herself willing to carry out her share of the imposed duty, was duly united to the young man who had just reached his majority. Somewhat similar to the above was the will of a Mr. Furstone, who left seven thousand pounds to any man legiti-

mately bearing the name "Furstone," who should discover and marry a Furstone.

Many valuable bequests have been made to dogs, and other domestic pets. The will of one Garland, who died in June, 1888, contained this clause: "I bequeath for my monkey, my dear and amusing Jocko, the sum of one hundred pounds per annum, to be employed for his sole use and benefit; to my faithful dog, Shock, and my well-beloved cat, Tib, a pension of five pounds; and desire that, in the case of the death of either of the three, the lapsed pension shall pass to the other two, between whom it shall be equally divided. On the death of all three, the sum appropriated shall become the property of my daughter Gertrude, to whom I give this preference among my children because of the large family she has, and the difficulty she finds in bringing them up." A Mrs. Elizabeth Hunter, in 1813, left two hundred a year to her parrot; and a Mr. Harper settled one hundred per annum on his "young black cat," the interest to be paid to his housekeeper, Mrs. Hodges, as long as the cat remained alive. Dr. Christiano, of Venice, again, left sixty thousand florins for the maintenance of his three dogs, with a condition that, at their death, the sum should be added to the funds of the University of Vienna.

An old Parisian lady bequeathed fifteen hundred a year to her butcher, whom she had never seen; while one man chalked his will on a corn-bin; and another inscribed his on a bed-post. Both the corn-bin and the bed-post are said to be filed in Doctors' Commons. Perhaps the whimsical will of a Scotch gentleman, who, having two daughters, bequeathed to each her weight, not in gold, but in one-pound notes, has been frequently quoted. At any rate, the elder of the two was considerably lighter than her sister, for she only got fifty-one thousand pounds, while the younger received fifty-seven thousand, five hundred and forty-four pounds. The three or four instances of wills in poetical form have also been often quoted, and do not require reproduction here. But, in conclusion, we may give the following curious clause in the testament of a New York gentleman: "I own seventy-one pairs of trousers, and I strictly enjoin my executors to hold a public sale, at which these shall be sold to the highest bidder, and the proceeds distributed to the poor of the city. I further desire that these garments shall in no way be examined or

meddled with, but be disposed of as they are found at the time of my death; and no one purchaser to buy more than one pair." The sale was actually held, and the seventy-one purchasers each found in one of the pockets bank-notes representing a thousand dollars.

REST! REST! PERTURBED SPIRIT.

A COMPLETE STORY.

IN a room, opening directly on to the verandah of an Indian bungalow, lay a man, apparently about sixty years of age.

From the pallor of his cheeks, the sunken aspect of which betokened advanced disease, and from the restless way in which he plucked incessantly the light covering thrown over him, it was easy to see that he was not long for this world.

He was attended by a slight, young girl, whose present office it was to fan him. As she fanned, he talked; but however much his words affected her—and affect her they did, for there was a great and abiding love between this man, her father, and herself—she showed not the slightest emotion, but fanned, fanned, fanned, and listened.

"Had it not been that he disinherited me, Zenia," said the sick man, "you would have been a rich woman. But my mother's hatred pursued me, and Eustace became my father's heir. That caused a difference between us. When I am dead, dearest, you must leave this place, and take the first steamer to England. Directly you arrive in London, go to my old friend, Mrs. Hunt. Her address is here in my pocket-book. For the sake of old times she will befriend you." A few more desultory words, a sigh or two of weariness, and Zenia's father slept.

The afternoon waned, the sun went down, and with scarcely any "between time" or gloaming, darkness fell upon the sultry earth.

Then the girl put down her fan, and stole out on to the verandah. Here, seated on a low wicker-chair, she abandoned herself to her great and hopeless grief. The doctor had told her that any shock, any display on her part of trouble or distress, would in all probability end his life suddenly. But here—out here, with him lying quietly asleep inside, and no one to look at her, she might for a while throw off all trammels of restraint and weep without hindrance.

The moon had risen, when the sick man

roused from his sleep. It flooded the tropical garden with its beams, and illuminated just that part of the verandah in which Zenia sat with a ray of mysterious-looking light.

"Zenia," cried the invalid, "come here, my child. I have had such a beautiful dream. I thought that you were in England with my brother Eustace, and that, after all, the old place was to be yours. You had reconciled past quarrels, darling, and all was well again."

"Were you there, father?" asked the girl, tenderly. "I should not care to be there, if you were not."

"I there, Zenia? No, dear; I was in my grave. But, oh, so happy to think of you with Eustace. Promise me you will go to him, Zenia—now, at once. Give me your promise."

With wondrous energy he raised his poor, wasted form from his couch. His daughter, fearful lest such unwonted exertion should do him harm, gave the required promise readily.

"Tell me where he lives, father," she asked.

But the sick man made no reply. Slowly, very slowly, he sank back upon his pillows. A great change of colour, as of a filmy grey gauze veil thrown across them, overspread his features; his eyes, like the eyes of a hunted animal, sought Zenia's, with a world of sorrow, pleading, and anxiety in their expression. Zenia Mordaunt spoke, at first, tenderly and quietly; then with entreaty and in great distress. But her father took no heed; his eyelids dropped, his breathing ceased, and, when in a little while the friend who had housed these wanderers—for such they were—entered the room, he found only one living being there; the man was dead.

The child's future was by no means a rosy one as at that time forecast. She was to go to England—that was certain. It was found that a sufficient sum of money for her passage and incidental expenses had been put aside by her father for the purpose. Beyond a few rupees, nothing now remained for her but this, and those few rupees should have belonged to the man who had housed them, for they were the price of the poor father's burial. Search as they might, however, no clue could be found to the whereabouts of Eustace Mordaunt, if Mordaunt were his name. The chances were that it was one assumed only by the dead man, who had apparently lived under some sort of a cloud. So

Zenia had only her father's old friend Mrs. Hunt, to whom a letter had at once been sent, to depend upon; and it was with the idea of proceeding to London, and finding her, that she took her passage and stepped on board the steam-ship "Eastern."

She was an attractive girl, this Zenia, and a good one, too; and the admiration she gained on the steam-ship "Eastern" was as sincere as it was unsought. From the Captain to the stewardess, this young and friendless passenger was the object of all kinds of solicitude. She was so quiet, so unassuming, and, as well, so sad, that interest in her was universal; interest totally opposed to sensation, however, and exhibited in different forms by each who affected it. Thus the Captain gave her a kindly, encouraging word whenever he came in contact with her; the cook sent little dainties which he thought might tempt her appetite—when cooks take fancies to any one they immediately endow them with a capricious appetite, to which it is necessary to pander—the stewardess was ever ready to wash out little laces for her, or to tuck clean tuckers into her bodices; and the ship's doctor obligingly buried all allusions to his profession, and, instead of dwelling on the horrors of seasickness and the predisposition of a traveller from India to that unwelcome experience, brought her books and newspapers, and sat by her sometimes on deck when he had time.

He was concerned for her; he noticed how apathetic she was, and how sadly, if patiently, she accepted her present life. Her melancholy loss had been communicated to him by the friend who had brought her on board, and it was with feelings of more than ordinary interest that he studied her character and conduct.

One afternoon he was by no means sorry to have a real excuse for rousing her from the lethargic reverie into which she had been plunged almost the entire day, seated under an awning in her deck-chair, with papers and books about her, at which she rarely, if ever, looked.

"It would be kind of you," said he, "if you would tear this linen into strips and roll it neatly and tightly for me, ready for use. I have a patient downstairs who is very ill, and I fear I may run short of bandages. Will you help me, Miss Mordaunt?"

"With pleasure," answered Zenia. "But your patient—has she a nurse with her?"

"My patient is a young man," replied the doctor.

"Nevertheless," interrupted Zenia, eagerly, "he must want a nurse. Can I be of any use? May I read to him, fan him, sit by him, do anything for him? Ah, Dr. Scott, if you only knew how much nursing I have done, and how desolate I am now! I can be trusted. Will you not try me?"

The doctor glanced away from the pretty pleading figure before him for a moment. He was a man of tender feelings, and this outburst was a revelation of suffering to which he could scarcely reply without a tremor in his voice.

"Come with me," he said at length, "and we will see what can be done." In an hour's time Zenia was installed as nurse to the young man, who lay so ill in his cabin.

His emaciated cheeks, with the burning patches on each, his lustrous eyes, his white thin hands, pointed to some lung affection. But Zenia did not ask what ailed him; no, not even his name, which she had never heard; her only aim was to ease, to comfort, and, if possible, to cure the patient before her. Her quiet energy was untiring; her devotion immense. To her it seemed as if once more she were doing something for the father who was dead; to the sick man, who benefited by her ministrations, she came as an angel in human form. For a few days her ceaseless care, her unwearying solicitude, the brightness which her calm presence dispensed around, the confidence her womanly strength inspired, were of immense advantage to the patient, who palpably improved.

So far did this amendment progress that Zenia was deceived, and looked forward to a time, not far distant, when she would sit by her invalid's side, on deck, under the awning, instead of down in the cabin.

But they had the Red Sea to pass through, and the doctor knew well that to hope to get him through the Red Sea alive was more than foolish. So when he languished and grew worse directly the good ship "Eastern" entered that sea, only Zenia and her patient were surprised, and spoke hopefully of how much better he would be in a day or two more, and how they would certainly be sitting then under the awning on deck.

To his very last hour the sick man hoped, and Zenia knew no other feeling than sure expectation of his recovery. Had he not already made wonderful progress, and was not this new languor satisfactorily accounted for by the intense heat they had had these two days?

One evening he slipped off his finger a ring which he habitually wore.

"Put it on your largest finger, nurse," he said to her, playfully, "and wear it in memory of the Red Sea."

Afterwards in her cabin Zenia looked at the ring. It had apparently been intended for a mourning token, and in the inside of the ring, words were engraven as follows: "In memoriam, Eustace Despard, Obiit, May the twenty-first, 1848."

Eustace—the name immediately arrested Zenia's attention. It was that of her father's brother. Surely, surely, this sick man could have no connection with her uncle, and yet it was possible, since Eustace was no common name. She determined to ask her patient. Yes, she would go at once, though their good-nights had been exchanged, and he was probably asleep by this time. If he were, of course she would not arouse him; but if he were not, and it was discovered that he and she were relatives, oh, how joyful a thing it would be for her! How thankful she would be thus soon to find the Eustace her father had bidden her seek out!

In haste she ran from her cabin to the one the sick man occupied. She knocked at the door, and was not surprised that no reply was given. But presently it was opened an inch or two, and the ship's doctor stood before her.

"May I speak to him for a moment, Dr. Scott?" she asked.

"Not now, child," replied the doctor, barring the small opening with his arm.

"He is asleep, then," thought Zenia, "and I would not for worlds disturb him." Disturb him? Nay, child. He sleeps the sleep that knows no waking; and once more thou art bereft.

Unconscious of trouble, Zenia hurried up the stairs for a whiff of air, and as she stood looking out at the clear heavens, and drinking in the cooler atmosphere of night, a strange thing happened to her.

Suddenly in front of her appeared a tall, thin man, apparently of about thirty years of age, dressed in a suit of light homespun. His hair, which was dark, was thrown back from a high, pale brow—this Zenia noticed as he raised his hat to her. His cheeks were bronzed; his eyes sparkled; his manner was eager, anxiously so.

"Excuse the liberty I take," said he, "but I am most desirous of knowing your name. Will you so far oblige me by telling me what it is?"

"My name," answered the girl, with

her usual quiet delivery, "is Zenia Moraunt."

"Not anything else?"

"No, nothing else."

"I thank you sincerely. Good-night."

Zenia returned the greeting, and went back to her cabin.

It was not until the next morning that she heard of her friend's death. The sad event was communicated to her as she paced the deck very early, by the doctor.

"Was he dead when I came last night?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Just," was the reply. "His end was very sudden, as such often are. He did not know himself that he was dying."

A solemn sight, indeed, is a burial at sea. The young man was consigned to the deep that very evening.

But Zenia was not present. The shock of his death had utterly prostrated her, and seemed to bring all over again, with redoubled force, the sorrow of her previous loss. But she was, as ever, very patient and uncomplaining; and a few days saw her once more seated in her deck-chair under the awning, with books and papers around her, just as they had been before. Every one was again kindness personified; and, among travellers and crew, she was universally compassionated and cherished.

One passenger more frequently than any other sought her out, and this was the young man in the homespun suit, who had accosted her on the evening her patient died. He came to her side only when she was alone; at which times he would talk to her most kindly, and never wearied of listening to her stories of her father, of their wanderings together, of her mother, who had died when she was a baby—in short, of anything that concerned her. Nor did it appear strange to this rather reticent child that she felt so much at ease with him, and liked to tell him of her past life. As regarded the others, even the doctor, she received, rather than gave, confidences; from this man she received none, and gave many.

At last the good ship "Eastern" reached its destination; and Zenia had only the last stage of her journey, by cab, to make. On the day of disembarkation, and for two or three previously, the child had not seen her new friend; and the doctor, whom she consulted as to his whereabouts, could not help her in the least, for he said he did not know the man. She was obliged, therefore, to bid him good-bye

in her own mind only, and to leave unsaid the words of heartfelt thanks which she had resolved she would speak to him, for all his kindness to her. He had told her nothing as to his future plans, and the chances were, she sorrowfully thought, that they would never meet again. But as she got off the ship she felt a hand grasp her own, and turning, once more beheld her comrade.

"Will any one meet you?" he asked, quietly, ignoring her exclamations of surprise, and eager questionings as to where he had been the past two days.

"Meet me? No," replied the girl, "they would not know what time the 'Eastern' got to port. What a lovely evening for my landing. Is it so lovely always here in England?"

"Not always," was the smiling reply.

Then he escorted his charge to a cab, shut the door upon her, and raising his hat, suddenly turned and left her.

"Shall I see you again?" cried Zenia, a wave of utter loneliness overtaking her as she hastily let down the cab window and looked out at the crowded dock. In vain, he was gone.

But Dr. Scott stood there instead, beaming with satisfaction that he had at length torn himself away from the clutches of some departing patient, in time to say farewell to his young friend.

"You were looking for me, then," he said, cheerily. "I have just put the Dawsons into their carriage, and am so glad to have a last peep at you. How well you have managed with your luggage, and so quickly too. Well, cabby, what is it?"

"Must move hon, sir, by horders," responded cabby. "What address, please?"

"Thirty-one, Travers Street, Cavendish Square," answered Zenia; and with a hearty handshake and a "God bless you" from Dr. Scott, the child was driven away.

It was rather a shock when the cab drew up at 31, Travers Street, to find the house in total darkness. All the lamps in the street were alight, for the red ball of fire that had welcomed Zenia to England with lurid pennons of orange and purple, had now sunk to rest, and all the surrounding houses showed points of light. This only was in darkness.

Indulgent cabby descended from his box and rang the bell; it was more than he was in the habit of doing for his fares, but this one he told himself was different, and had just come from a voyage, poor, lonely young thing.

Once, twice, thrice, he rang, and no one answered. Then he descended the door-steps and took counsel with Zenia.

"Seems to me, miss," said he, "as if there ain't no one there."

"Try once more," responded Zenia; and once more a resounding peal echoed through the house, and cabby stood in meditation.

"That done it," he cried at last, triumphantly, and the clanking of chains and pushing back of bolts bore witness that cabby was right.

A moment more and Zenia stood by the door, face to face with an old caretaker.

"Yes," assented she, "Mrs. Hunt do live here, leastways did, for she's dead now, poor thing, and so can scarcely be said to reside any longer in this vale of sorrows. Not but what she's above ground yet, a-lying in her Devonshire 'ouse in state, having died there three days ago; so, perhaps, I might still be permitted to say she do live here, miss, after all."

Zenia gasped.

"Did she—did Mrs. Hunt expect me?" she faltered, tears rising to her pretty eyes, and the colour fading from her face.

"Not as I knows on, miss," replied the old woman, slowly. "But stay, I remember my missis having a letter the day before she went to Devonshire, which were not long ago, she having caught cold on the way, which caused her death; and of her answering it, and leaving it with me until called for. Perhaps you are that young lady. Stay, so as I mayn't be cheated, let's say the name together, miss, and if either's wrong, you are not the lady meant."

So together, syllable for syllable, Zenia and the woman pronounced the name, Zenia Mordaunt, and the woman ran for the letter. Then she directed the cabman to "up" with the boxes; and he, having "upped" with them, and departed, Zenia was led by the woman into a little room, which should, said she, "soon be made comfortable and fit for a queen."

Here the poor child read her letter. It was brief, and to the point:

"Mrs. Hunt," ran the note, "has no recollection of any old friend answering to the name of George Mordaunt; but as Zenia Mordaunt is friendless in London, she may stay at Mrs. Hunt's house, on the night of her arrival in England, and must travel on to Combe-Jesmond, in Devonshire, where Mrs. Hunt is at present residing, on the day following. Arrived there, if Miss Mordaunt can make good her tale,

and satisfy Mrs. Hunt as to her identity, and the identity of her father with a friend of old days, Mrs. Hunt will be glad to do all in her power for her."

Had Mrs. Hunt been alive, this missive would have brought but cold comfort to the child. But with Mrs. Hunt dead, comfort of every kind fled away altogether. What was she to do? The good old caretaker advised her to the best of her ability.

"Go down to Devonshire, dearie," said she. "My old missis had a housekeeper of wonderful brain. The brain that woman has is not to be believed. I'll back Mrs. Parker to help you out of your troubles, my dear; indeed, I shouldn't be surprised, and neither would many I could name—only you wouldn't know 'em—if Mrs. Parker weren't Mrs. Hunt now, or as good, seeing as the old lady hadn't any relations, except distant, living."

Sorrowful at heart, Zenia sat by the fire-side alone, while the caretaker busied herself with making arrangements for the night.

Suddenly the door of the apartment opened, and her friend of the homespun suit stood by her side.

Up started Zenia, much excited.

"Oh!" she cried; "this is strange. How did you know I was here? I called out to you, 'Shall I see you again?' but you had disappeared. How glad I am you are here! Come to the fire, and sit down. I am in trouble, my kind friend."

"And I am come to help you," answered the young man, "if that may be; tell me what you will do."

"The old woman here advises my going down to Devonshire," answered Zenia, forgetting to mention that Mrs. Hunt was dead.

"Then Mrs. Hunt does live at Combe-Jesmond?" returned the young man, eagerly. "Oh, how strange! how very strange. But is she well? Is she there?"

"She is dead," answered the child.

Then said he:

"That is as I imagined; but yet," he added, more to himself than to Zenia, "I feel that all will yet be well; better, far better than I in my wildest, happiest moments ever believed it would be. But, come, dear, let us talk about Combe-Jesmond."

"You know it?" asked Zenia.

"Yes, I know it," he replied. "I once lived there. I know it very, very well."

He looked at the burning coals of the fire, as if he saw in them the place he said he knew so very, very well. There was a tinge of regret or sadness in the tone of his voice as he spoke, which Zenia, with her quick perception, noted at once.

"Why don't you go back there?" she asked him, eagerly. "You seem as if you loved it, and wanted to be there. Why don't you go back?"

"Because," he answered, "I would much rather be where I am now. It is scarcely possible to leave a much-loved place, without regret; but even Combe Jesmond, lovely and dear as it is to me, is not so dear, nor so lovely, as the place I now inhabit. But away with such comparisons. There is a poor, lonely old man, living at Combe Jesmond, whose history I should like to tell you, if you will listen."

"Indeed, I will," replied Zenia.

Still gazing at the ruddy fire, the young man spoke, the while Zenia leaned forward with her elbows on her knees and her chin resting on the palms of her hands in a child's attitude of attention.

"Many years ago," proceeded he, "there were two sons of a father and mother living at the old Manor at Combe Jesmond. The eldest, a fine daring fellow, some five years his brother's senior, was, for reasons known only to herself, utterly detested by his mother, who showered upon the younger not only his own due portion of love, but also, all that should by right have belonged to the elder born. The estate was not entailed, and when the father of these two boys fell ill, the mother used her power and influence to get it left to her beloved son.

"For a time the father resisted; but at length, with some vehement argument, the mother prevailed, and on his death-bed he signed a will, leaving to his elder son the merest pittance; to the younger, the entire estate and all else that he owned. In time, the young squire married; that is to say, after his mother's death. But his wife died very soon, leaving him with a son, a sickly boy, who grew too fast, and did everything else he ought not to in that way, and caused his father great anxiety. It was always supposed he never would be reared; but he grew to man's estate in spite of prognostications to the contrary."

"And what became of the elder brother?" asked Zenia, struck somewhat, she scarce knew why, by this story.

"It was never known what became of

him. Since his father's death, Combe Jesmond has not known him. Report said many things; but no one really knew the truth about him, poor fellow."

"Why do you say, 'poor fellow'?"

"Because I am sorry he was disinherited. I always felt sorry for that. You see, naturally his life was embittered by his mother's unmotherlike treatment of him, and the strange circumstance of his utter disappearance made his memory a very sad one. But my father's sympathies were against him, I grieve to say."

"Your father's?" asked Zenia, interrogatively.

It was the first time he had ever alluded to any relation of his own.

"Yes," was the monosyllabic reply, and Zenia, noting the rising colour in his cheeks, hastened to change the subject.

"Is this man you have told me of happy in his son? The estate does not seem to have brought him much comfort, since you call him a poor, lonely old man. Lonely, you said. Is his son dead?"

"His son is dead," was the quiet reply, and Zenia's fellow-passenger rose to leave her.

"I should like to go to the old place once more," he said, wistfully. Then his face lighted up with a great and joyful expression. "I shall go," he cried. "Good-night, little child. We meet again to-morrow, at Waterloo; so it is not good-bye. To-morrow—and Combe Jesmond! What happiness, what intense joy the thought is to me!"

He grasped Zenia's hand in his, and left the room, forbidding her either to ring the bell, that the old woman might open the front door, or to attend him herself.

The next morning, sure enough, just as the train started from Waterloo Station the young man stepped hastily into the compartment occupied by Zenia alone.

He was the liveliest of travelling companions, and as they sped along kept relating to the girl stories of the places they were passing through, helping her, as he said, to feel "at home" in this England she had never seen before.

"What a day," said he to himself, "what a day to leave it for ever; to carry away in one's memory the sights and the sounds of this beloved land! A still clear air, with a frost, and sunlight sparkling over fields white and crisp with rime. Look, Zenia, how that baby tries his weight upon that icy pool. It is almost the first frost he has seen. Take care, by-the-bye,

child, of this climate of ours. It is treacherous and variable, not like the Indian one you have left. But though treacherous and variable, how dear, how very dear—because it is England."

It was with an air of radiant happiness that he recognised the landmarks of the country as they approached Combe Jesmond.

"There is Langdon Church," he cried, long before the train reached that place. "Many and many's the time I have climbed to the top of the tower to get a view of five counties. Now, child, on this side is Hidbro' Beacon. You must go up there some day. And there is dear old High-beeches. Explore the trees, Zenia, and you will find two hearts carved on the bark of one, pierced with an arrow, and a ring beneath. That is what I and little Mary Monmouth carved many years ago; she the ring, and I the hearts pierced. Now, dear, give me your wraps and let me strap them up; we are flying through Hilton, and the next station is Combe Jesmond, where we stop. Did you see those red chimney stacks through the trees? Yes? Well, that is the house in which the poor, lonely old man, I told you of, lives."

Soon the train came to a standstill in the tiny station of Combe Jesmond. For a moment Zenia lost sight of her friend, while an obsequious porter, who opened the door, led her hastily away to claim her luggage at the van. But she found him again at the foot of the steps leading up to the station, seated in a low basket carriage.

"Get in, child," he cried, hastily. "They will send your luggage after you."

And before Zenia could turn to the porter who had not yet made his appearance with her trunk, she was whirled away at a mad pace from the station.

"You know the country very well," she said, turning to her companion. "Is it far from here to Mrs. Hunt's?"

But the young man made no answer, and after waiting for a moment Zenia looked somewhat timorously up into his face.

He was gazing ahead, as if to mark any obstacle that might suddenly come between him, and his wild reckless course. His profile was set, and looked as different now to the gay, boyish features of their railway journey, as darkness does to light. Recalling her wonted courage, Zenia took heart of grace, and caught hold of the cape of his inverness, which ever and anon, in the

wind they were passing through, flapped against her face.

"Is it the sight of your old home that makes you look so stern and sad?" she asked, raising her voice and her head that she might get nearer to him.

A wan smile crossed his features.

"I am playing a game of chance," he replied at length. "Riding a race with issues of immense importance in my hands. Directly I found you out, Zenia, and who you were, I was restless until I could accomplish happiness for you. Dear friendless, homeless child, the sick man's guardian angel, this world is too hard a place for you to live in, without a relation in it to smooth and brighten your path. And he of whom I spoke to you—that lonely old man, the world is harsh and unkind to him, too, despite his lands and money. I would not have him pine away in hopeless friendlessness—no, no; immeasurable joy be mine if I can prevent that, and at the same time bring happiness to you, my child. In perfect joy and gladness I shall rest when you two are united, as you will be, I trust, ere long. Remember, for your comfort, Zenia, when you think of me, that in doing what I am allowed to do now, the dearest hope of my life—ay, of my whole, my perfect life, is fulfilled. He will know it, when he knows you, and will tell you that he, too, is thankful at last."

They were whirling now through some open gates, that led up a long carriage-drive, with a wooded ravine on one side, and laurels and a fence on the other. Not one jot or tittle did the driver moderate his pace, though the road took twisty turns, and more than once the vehicle seemed in imminent danger of being over-set. At length, with a laugh, an exultant laugh, he pointed out with his whip a lighted row of windows in an upper storey of the house they now were rapidly approaching. On his face was a look of contentment. All harshness, all sorrow, all anxiety was gone, as he gazed down upon his companion with a beam of ineffable satisfaction.

"We are in time, little child," he gasped. "There was none to be lost, I see; but we are in time. Oh, Zenia, dear, dear little nurse, think of me sometimes, as I shall think of you so often, so often. I will watch for you, and wait for you, and welcome you, oh, so gladly! when we meet again. Is it time to go, now; is it really time? The wrench is

very bitter, but I go right gladly. Good-bye, dear child, good-bye; we meet again no more in this world."

"No more?" sobbed Zenia. "Did you say, no more?"

But she spoke to the wind.

The chaise was driverless; and the horse, trembling and frightened, with ears thrown back, and foam-covered mouth, dashed on madly at runaway speed.

Then Zenia knew nothing until she opened her eyes in a great old hall, to see before her an immense fire burning on the hearth; and above it a full-length picture of a young man in a homespun suit, who looked down upon her with a reassuring, loving smile.

"Are you better, miss?" asked a voice beside her. "Because when you are, the master says he would like to see you. He's very ill indeed; prostrated by a family bereavement, miss; but the doctor do say he've taken a turn for the better now, though he were bad enough an hour ago. You've had a narrow escape, you have, miss. You came dashing up to our front door in the pony-shay what went down to meet Mrs. Jerry, our housekeeper, coming back from Exeter market. Ben had only gone up to speak to his sister, the station-master's wife, for a moment, leaving the shay; and when he came down it was gone, and you run away with, miss, by young horse Georgie, who always were a goer, and a lover of his own stable, where he now is. Directly that young animal had disposed of you, miss, which he did by pitching of you on to the top step below the entrance-door, he offed to his own diggings in stables, which were, to say smallest, a cunning thing to do. But come, I stand chattering here while master waits, and you too, miss. I'll help you up the stairs, please."

But Zenia had not been hurt, and could walk alone.

In a few moments she stood by a bed, on which lay a sick man of about five and fifty years, very thin and aged-looking, with grey hair and refined features. Directing that a chair should be placed for the young lady, he told his servant to withdraw, and held out his hand courteously to the child.

"You have been hurt," he said, slowly, "by getting into my pony-chaise by mistake, and being run away with. Will you tell me whither you were bound, that I may let your friends know of your safety? For I cannot let you leave my house tonight. It is late and cold, and with such

a shock as you have had, great care must be taken of you."

"I was going to Mrs. Hunt's," replied Zenia, who then proceeded to assure her host that she was not in the least bit hurt, and could go at once if he liked.

"Nay, little girl, but I do not like. Ring the bell for me, please; Mrs. Jerry will be home by this time, and will look after you."

The child rose obediently, and essayed to pull the bell-rope, which hung by the sick man's side. Something on her hand, however, attracted his attention; for, with a sharp cry of pain, before she had pulled the rope, he clutched it and held it up to his eyes.

"Where did you get this ring?" he asked, eagerly, pointing to the ruby the invalid on board the "Eastern" had given her.

"From a friend who died on the ship that brought me from India," replied Zenia. "I may call him a friend, I think, for I helped to nurse him on the voyage; and he gave me this ring in the Red Sea the very night he died."

"What was his name?" asked the man, eagerly.

"I never knew it," answered Zenia. "He called me nurse, and I did not ask him for his name. There is one inside this ring; perhaps it was his. I was going to ask him, because——"

"Show it to me, please," interrupted the invalid. "This ring is, I believe, one I have known for years. The name should be Eustace Despard. Ay, there it is. Then it was my poor boy's, and you nursed him. Thank you, thank you. I am his father, and know so little about his last hours. How strange that you should have come here by this chance to tell me of my Eustace. He was never strong, my dear boy, and went out for a voyage to see what it would do for him. I always said he would come home cured, and would not really believe he was so ill. He should have been back yesterday had all been well; and he is lying at the bottom of the sea instead. Sit here, child, and tell me all you know about my son. Ah me, ah me! my dear son!"

So Zenia sat on a stool by the bereaved father's bedside, he holding her hand all the while, and drinking in the little details that she told him of the young man's last illness. Then she tried once more to find out whether this Eustace was related to the Eustace her father had spoken of as his brother.

"My father died in India," she said simply, turning her sweet face up to that of her new friend, and feeling involuntarily for the portrait she constantly wore beneath her gown. "Just before I came to England—I came at his request, indeed, and am on my way to Mrs. Hunt's (although I know she is dead) because he told me to go there before he died—he dreamed a happy dream, and told me to find his brother Eustace. But that I cannot do, because father died too quickly to tell me where he was."

The invalid lay back on his pillows with closed eyes.

"Is it possible?" he murmured. "And yet I know nothing of my brother, of his marriage, or his death. But it would be strange were it so. To think that my boy, who always begged me to find my brother and befriend him, should be nursed by his own cousin, not knowing her; and that chance should have brought her here. Tell me, child, what is your name?" he asked, tenderly, looking at the small, up-turned, expectant face.

"I am named Zenia Mordaunt," the girl replied.

"Not anything else?" asked the invalid, eagerly, in the self-same words of the passenger on board the "Eastern."

"No," sighed Zenia, "not anything else."

Then a sudden idea struck the suffering man.

"Go," said he, "to that cabinet yonder, open it, and should you see any face there in the row of miniatures hanging on the rail, like your father's was, bring it to me."

Quick as thought Zenia went, glanced along the rail and detected the miniature of a youth, apparently about nineteen or twenty years of age.

"Here he is," she cried, triumphantly. "Here is my father. I know it to be him, because I wear his likeness always, and it is the same as this."

Then the two heads bent together over the miniature and its duplicate, which Zenia drew from her bodice.

"This is indeed my brother," said the old man, at length, "and I thank Heaven that you are my own niece, Zenia Mordaunt Despard. Ah, my child, my cruelty, and our mother's, drove my brother from this country, and often have I sworn that I would die rather than seek him out, though Eustace, my own boy, implored me to the last hour we were together, to do so. But now that you have come, I can, I hope, undo some of the wrong I have done; and you, my child, will be my daughter, in the

place of Eustace, my lost son. I am thankful to Heaven who sent you."

Not many explanations now were needed to identify the dead man, George Mordaunt, with the George Mordaunt Despard who was disinherited by his father in favour of his younger son. Zenia had papers with her, showing how her father had married, with certificates of her own birth and baptism.

Thus her father's dream came true, and Zenia, the daughter of the house, reconciled past quarrels.

Always, as she sits before the portrait that hangs above the fireplace in the great hall, Zenia thinks of the good comrade who brought her hither, and tears come into her eyes, despite the kindly, loving smile he has for her, and the peculiarly tender glance of his grey eyes, when she remembers his words, that they will meet no more again in this world.

I do not know, and cannot guess, whether she connects that comrade with the poor invalid cousin she nursed on board the "Eastern." To no one but to me did she ever communicate the history of her voyage, after her cousin's death, and even in telling me the tale she in no wise linked the two men together.

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! Where thou art, perchance thou seest that union thou thyself didst wish for, and art happy.

"FOR SWEET CHARITY."

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

By B. DEMPSTER.

Author of "Through Gates of Gold," "My Lady's Chamber," "The Mystery of Deadman's Flat," etc. etc.

CHAPTER I.

It was said, in the days when the world was young, that the gods who were disobedient were sometimes banished from Olympus, and compelled to wander on this earth, making their dwelling among mortals, till, by many good deeds done, they had expiated their sins, and were allowed to return to the land of the gods from which they had been exiled.

It seemed to a girl—standing looking, one summer evening, over the fence that shut in her garden—that she saw one of these banished gods coming towards her down the narrow lane. The western sun fell full on his face, and she thought she had never seen a more beautiful one. It reminded her of a photograph her grandfather had, of the statue of the sun-god

Apollo. This man, coming slowly down the lane towards her, was tall and powerfully built; but walked with a careless ease and grace that carried off the height and massive strength of limb and muscle. He was sauntering along so very slowly, his eyes bent on the ground, that she had plenty of time to take in the whole of his beautiful manhood. She forgot herself as she looked, leaning forward, one hand resting on the fence, the other holding the roses she had just gathered in her garden.

Suddenly he raised his eyes and met hers in full. But, perhaps, the sun's glowing rays had dazzled his, for he stared straight at her, without seeming to see her.

She had turned her face swiftly, blushing hotly at having been caught looking, but too proud to hurry away. She glanced carelessly about her, then drew back, with affected indifference, from the fence.

But the man's dazed eyes had seen her at last. He stood still for one second in the lane. Then came hastily towards her.

"I am hungry," he said, with a slight smile, stopping on the other side of the fence, just opposite to her. "Can you, for sweet charity, give me a piece of bread?"

As he stood, the trees near them shut out the red light of the sun from his face, and, with its glory passed from it, it looked strangely pale and weary. The clothes, which a moment before had seemed fitting garments for his strength and grace, had become shabby, dust-stained, out-at-elbow. Whatever they might once have been, they were now a very mockery of the unmistakeably aristocratic air of his face and appearance.

"I have eaten nothing since yesterday," he said again, in the same gentle voice, "and I am starving. If you won't take pity on me, I shall have to give it up."

"Are you—really hungry?" she asked, in a shy, awed voice. "Really—oh, wait a moment," and she turned and ran up the path through the trees.

The man looked after her for a moment, then the trees, in the golden light of the sinking sun, seemed to waver to and fro, as if performing some mystic dance about the slender, running figure, and his brain grew confused, and he began to wonder, vaguely, if he had spoken, or if it had only been a dream, that the pretty child with her shy, sweet eyes had told him to wait.

"Hang it!" he muttered, clutching at the fence and swaying unsteadily on his feet; then his hand relaxed its grip, and he sank heavily down into the dust of the road, sitting there, with his back leaning against the fence, his eyes closed.

How long he sat there he did not know. He was aroused from his semi-unconsciousness by feeling a cup of milk held to his parched lips, by hearing a frightened, unsteady voice begging him to drink.

The "child" was standing out in the lane by his side, with the cup of milk in one hand, and a plate of bread in the other.

"Oh! I am so sorry! Oh! please eat! I couldn't be any quicker. I had to wait till——"

She stopped, blushing hotly, and held the cup again to his lips. He was recovering now, and eagerly drained the milk to the last drop. Then she held out a piece of the bread, which he took and ate ravenously. There was more of the mortal in him than the immortal, and he seemed very hungry indeed. But all her quaint fancy was lost now, in her eager distress and concern. She had read somewhere, that when men are starving, they must be fed at first only in small quantities; and in spite of his evident impatience and disappointment, she would only break him off small pieces at a time, carefully holding the plate out of his reach, as if she were afraid he would snatch it from her.

"I say—give me the whole slice," he pleaded eagerly. "If you only knew how very hungry I am! I could eat the plate too!"

"But it might kill you!" in anxious alarm. "Oh!——"

With gentle swiftness he had taken the slice from her hand, and a moment later it was gone. He laughed softly at her dismayed face. Then, before she knew what he was going to do, he had caught the skirt of her dress and pressed it to his lips. Then his white face flushed a dull red, and he stumbled to his feet.

"I was starving, and you gave me food," he said, in an odd, hoarse voice. "But you have given me something better even than that. You have given me back light!"

She had drawn swiftly back, terrified at his strange manner. The country lane was lonely and silent. It was her grandfather's right of way, and he allowed no trespassers. The house stood a good way back in the garden. There was no one near. Perhaps

her face betrayed her, for he flushed again, and laughed a short, bitter laugh.

"Do I look to have sunk so low?" he exclaimed, "or do you think me mad? Perhaps I am mad. I've been a fool for so long. What can I say to you for the supper you have given me? I can't thank you. I feel such a brute for having asked you for it. I never thought I should have come to begging. Though I was starving, it isn't the food that has saved me. It was that look in your face—that note in your voice. Do you know what I was thinking of, as I came along? How I was to get a pistol to blow out my brains. I feel that I can pull along without the pistol for a little longer. Good-night; and if there is a God, may He bless you!"

He turned sharply away, and the next moment was striding on again down the lane, the red light of the sun once more shining on his face and on his powerful figure. But not even its shining could cast a glamour over him now. She could only think of it falling on the pale, drawn face, the desperate eyes, the travel-stained, ragged clothes. Then a sudden rush of tears dimmed her vision, as she stood looking after him; and when her eyes cleared again, he had turned the bend in the lane, and disappeared from sight.

She walked slowly back to the house, and that night went supperless to bed. Such an unheard-of piece of extravagance as giving food away, would never have been forgiven; so she dared not ask for more. As it was, she had had to wait her opportunity of slipping out of the house with her supper, for she had given her own to the starving man who had fainted by their garden-fence. She lived there, in the old, rambling house, with her grandfather, and the old man and woman who waited on him. They lived by rule, on a plan of economy which was next door to penury. Her grandfather ought to have been a rich man; but, by the treachery of a relative, he had lost almost everything. The losses had affected his brain. He was possessed of a mania to screw and save, till he had made up the sum out of which he had been cheated. An impossible task; but it was the only hope and pleasure left in his life.

The old man and woman who had known him almost all his life, sympathised with his craze, and helped him to the utmost. The girl, who had been left to the care of her grandfather, when a child of nine, had grown accustomed to it, and, knowing no

other life, was fairly happy and contented. But no screwing nor pinching could affect her morally. She was the same to-day, at seventeen, as she had been at nine—when she entered the penurious household. And so, to-night, she had slipped out and given her supper to the starving stranger; and so, too, she lay awake to-night, forgetting her lost supper in thoughts of the man who had had it. Who was he? What was the strange mystery of his destitution, his despair, his misery?

What was he doing there starving at their gates? His eyes haunted her. She trembled again, with a curious feeling, half fear half something else, which she could not analyse, as she remembered the strange, wild way in which he had kissed the folds of her dress. And she fell asleep at last, crying a little over the mystery, and dreamt of the story she had read, of how Apollo had once done penance on the earth; and it seemed to her as if the sun-god came to crave her charity as she stood among her roses, and that he had eyes like the stranger she had spoken to that night.

CHAPTER II.

"OH yes, he had another son; but he is never mentioned. He did something very disgraceful, and Lord Goldtree turned him out of doors, and no one knows what has become of him. The last that was seen of him was at the Derby, some years ago, where all the men cut him. Such cheek it was of him to go! He has never dared show his face in decent society again. Oh! he was as bad as he could be," and pretty little Mrs. Cecil made a gesture of disdainful contempt. "He was the eldest, too. It was a good thing for Charlie, my husband, for he will inherit nearly everything. It's only a bother he can't have the title. That must be Will's as long as he lives. But those sort of men always come to a bad end, some time. I dare say he's out in America, in those wild parts, where men are always shooting each other."

"And you think Mr. Cecil may get shot, too," said her companion, looking thoughtfully at pretty Mrs. Charles Cecil.

It was an experience for this companion, to sit listening to this smiling chatter, in which a man's ruined life and his probable ignominious death were all discoursed in the same tone as the dinner-party of the night before, and the new dress that was to be.

"Oh, yes. Will would never keep out

of a row, if there were one going on! And, really, it would be quite a merciful dispensation of Providence for us all. For him, too, in fact. He would never dare return to England. Lord Goldtree declares he will have him arrested directly he sets foot in England, and, though he is his eldest son, have him tried like any common man. And he would too! Just think of the disgrace! A public trial. With all the papers full of it for any common person to read! I should die of the shame of it! And so I always tell Charlie! And I'm sure I don't know how Charlie and I would get on if the old man did forgive him. For he used to give Will everything, and now of course we have it. But it was really dreadful before for us!" And the pretty baby face looked hard and angry for a moment. But the smiles returned. "Anyway, it's all right now. And, by-the-bye, Miss Carr, I have decided on having the gown Madame Marie described. It's too lovely! And after all I shall be able to pay her some time"—"when the old man's gone," she was going to say, but checked herself. It was a mere instinct that made her hesitate. She did not mind what she said to her companion. She liked her in her way, and was kind to her. But, for anything else, the companion might have been made of different flesh and blood, so little did it matter to her what Miss Carr thought of her.

"Just write that note to her, and now I am going upstairs to dress." She fluttered, in her pretty morning gown, out of the room, and left Miss Carr to write the note. Miss Carr wrote it, and then, walking over to the fireplace, stood for awhile looking down into the flames. It was a grey January day, but the chill and the fog outside seemed a long way off from the pretty room, with its warm, fragrant air. There were soft hangings, and lovely flowers, and all the dainty luxuries that women, such as Mrs. Charles Cecil, gather about them. This was one of the suite of rooms set apart for her and her husband's use in Lord Goldtree's town house; and they had furnished them after their own fancy, which, it must be owned, was an extremely luxurious and costly fancy. The father lived in his own suite of apartments, and the two households, under the same roof, were entirely distinct. This suite used, at one time, to belong to the elder son, who had disgraced himself.

Miss Carr had come into Mrs. Charles's household, as companion, six months before.

Up till then she had been earning her bread as a governess. But her health had given way, and the doctor had suggested easier employment. Through the interest of a friend she had succeeded in obtaining her present position—Mrs. Charles having been suddenly possessed of a new caprice to have a companion. It can scarcely be said that Miss Carr found her present employment easier. The work might have been lighter at times; and there were even days of complete holiday, when Mrs. Charles almost seemed to forget her existence. But there were many things so eminently distasteful to her, that at moments she felt her position intolerable. One of her most trying duties was to have to sit and listen to Mrs. Charles Cecil's chatter. Her face, as she stood gazing into the fire, entirely expressed her feeling on the subject. It might rather have startled gay, selfish, unthinking little Mrs. Charles. Now Miss Carr had, of course, heard of the elder son's sins. They were sins that the best of women find hard to forgive. Miss Carr despised, and even hated him, as far as it was possible to hate an unknown sinner; but Mrs. Charles's chatter revolted her. After all, he was a human being, and her husband's brother. To hear his probable death in some drunken brawl discussed in that hopeful fashion, with the regretful longing after the title, the only thing left to the outcast of his inheritance, filled her with disgust. That outcast might be miserable, starving, while his sister-in-law was squandering thousands on unnecessary toilettes. Her thoughts went back to the man she had once helped. She had never quite forgotten him, though the years that had followed the scene by the garden-fence had been full enough of their own troubles and toil to deaden the interests of her more childish days. This man, too, might have drifted downwards from such a world as this. She smiled a little at her own fancy of the disobedient gods; but the smile was half sad. She had been full of fancies in those days. She did not seem to have many left now. Perhaps she had not time for them.

"It is as well," she said, turning from the fire. "They weren't much good, after all."

As she went back to the writing-table to continue the notes she had to write, one of the footmen entered the room, and brought her over a letter. She took it from the silver salver, wondering who her correspondent was. The footman told her

it had been left at the door by a woman yesterday afternoon, and that it had been forgotten. He seemed genuinely sorry at the neglect, for Miss Carr was liked by all the servants, and she forgave him. But as she opened it, her colour changed. The note came upon her like a voice from the dead past, of which she had been thinking. The summer evening, the lonely lane, even herself, little more than a child, holding her roses, came back to her.

"If you have not forgotten your sweet charity of ten years ago, if you can trust the man to whom you then gave help and hope, will you meet him this evening at five o'clock by the fountain at the Serpentine, on the right-hand side?"

She sat reading the note over and over in a bewildered fashion. Suddenly she sprang to her feet. "This evening!" Why, that meant yesterday. It was dated yesterday morning. And they had not given it to her. And he had perhaps gone, and—— Then a revulsion set in. What did it mean? How did he know she was here? What did he want with her? Of course she could not go! It was impertinent. It was a joke, perhaps. At five o'clock it would be quite dark. And in the gardens, too, which would be so lonely and empty, at that hour! Miss Carr continued to write her notes. But by the end of luncheon, which she had alone, one thought which had been present all the time she had performed her tasks, took complete possession of her. He had perhaps gone there yesterday, and waited, and waited, and at last gone away, thinking that the charity that had helped him once had grown cold.

At half-past four she left the house. She was free that afternoon. Mrs. Cecil had lunched out, and was paying a round of visits. No one ever troubled where she went for her walk. And this afternoon she went towards the gardens. Perhaps she would not have gone, but for the delay in the letter. If he had gone, she felt she owed him some reparation. It was scarcely likely that he would go again to-day. But he might; and he might need help. She reached the fountain at last. It was dark now, and the gardens full of a chill, white mist. As she came up to the basin's edge, she brushed suddenly against a tall figure. She thought first it was a workman, for he was dressed in the rough clothes of an artisan. But as she uttered an apology, he said something, and she found that it was the man she had come to meet.

"It is a good thing you tumbled against me," he said, with a laugh, "for we should never have seen each other. I was just wondering——"

"I couldn't come yesterday," she began, hurriedly, feeling very glad he had come again, after all, and yet half frightened, both at him for having done so, and at herself for being there now, too.

"It was only too good of you to come to-day," he said, in a different voice. "Yesterday, as I waited, I thought what a presumptuous fool you must have thought me! After ten years. I should never have dared, had not I——" He stopped short.

It was too dark for them to see each other's faces clearly, but their eyes were beginning to grow accustomed to the dusk. He was looking down earnestly at her, and again she thought of the young girl with the roses, in the summer evening light, and was glad that it was now so dark. The next she was ashamed of that flash of foolish, regretful, woman's vanity.

"I hope you have been well and happy since then," she said, gently, lifting her face to him so that he might see the changes of those few years if he would.

"I have been—well," he said, with a half-bitter, half-mocking note in his voice that jarred on her a little. "But I did not ask you here to speak of myself; it was of you."

"Of me?"

"Yes. Your grandfather is dead. He has been dead nearly eight years now, has not he? And you have worked ever since for your daily bread, and the old house is shut up, and it must not even be sold."

"How do you know all this?" with an astonished, half-angered note in her voice.

He answered the last.

"Do not think I have been prying into your affairs from idle curiosity. Indeed, it is only within the last week, I have known all this. I came over to England for some business, and I had to go down to Broadford, and I went to your house to make enquiries after you."

"Don't think me impertinent," gently, as she drew back a step. "I must tell you all the story. I have just come from America. There, I came across a man; he told me a strange thing. All the stranger because I had once met you; because you had once been so good to me. The man was dying. He is dead now; but what he told me seemed important enough to give me the excuse of asking to see you. Your

grandfather had a brother who once defrauded him of a large inheritance. At least, he thought his brother did."

"He did," with proud anger. She, too, had espoused the dead man's cause.

A slight smile parted his lips.

"You must not always judge by appearances," he said, in an odd voice.

"I want you to give me the permission to thoroughly search your old house. It was shut up when I was there. The daughter of your grandfather's old servant, who lives there, would not, of course, let me enter. For certain reasons of my own, I did not want to go to your lawyer. I would have written and asked your permission without forcing this interview upon you; but I was afraid. Naturally, you would not have granted such an apparently extraordinary request. But I hoped, if I saw you, I could make you understand better. Give me leave. I promise you you shall never regret it! Any more than I shall ever forget that vision I had of you ten years ago. But for you——"

He broke off. There was a short silence. Then she held out her hand.

"You may do as you wish. I will write to Jane."

He took her hand, and bending swiftly, kissed it. Not as he had kissed the folds of her dress long ago; but with a tender reverence that killed in her heart the last feeling of fear for him that might have lingered there. He walked a little way back with her through the dusk and mist; but left her directly they came to a more frequented part.

"I wish I dared see you into a cab outside," he said, abruptly, as he parted from her. "But it would not do for you. I wish some one else could do for you what I am going to do. But I promised. I will only ask one promise from you, and that is, that you will never speak to any one of the share I have had in it."

She gave the promise.

About a quarter of an hour later, as he, too, turned out of the garden gates, he stopped for a moment under the gas-lamp, undecided, for a moment, which way to turn. London was not a safe place for him to be in, even in his present disguise. He put up his hand and pushed his hat a

little back from his face. He hoped Miss Carr would write at once to the woman in charge. He must run down the next day. There was danger in delay. Besides, for his own sake, he would be glad to get out of England again. The associations were too painful. As he stood hesitating, a brougham passed. Mrs. Charles Cecil, who was in it, happened to bend forward, and caught sight of the tall, well-built workman, just as he lifted his hand to his cap.

The brougham rolled on into the gaslit dusk of the winter's night. Mrs. Charles Cecil leant back in the brougham, white and chill as the mist outside.

When her husband came home from his club, that afternoon, she met him at his dressing-room door. He saw that something had disturbed her, and he followed her rather anxiously into the room.

She put up her hand to sign to him that her maid was in the room beyond, and then whispered:

"Will is in London. I saw him to-night, dressed as a common workman. We must get rid of him, somehow!"

His face reflected the anger and fear on hers. He nodded. They could not say much more at the moment; but all the time they were dressing for dinner, they thought it over. They both came to the same conclusion. In spite of the handsome allowance made them by the old man, they were terribly in debt. Should the father relent towards his firstborn, they were ruined.

"And your father does think of him," said Mrs. Cecil, with spiteful anger. "He isn't as angry as he was. If they met, goodness only knows what tomfoolery he might not be guilty of. There is only one thing that he wouldn't get over—public disgrace."

"You mean, we had better get him arrested for that forgery," said her husband, in a strange, low tone.

"Don't put it all on me!" sharply, with a slight shiver. "You think so, as well as me!"

"There's no doubt, if Will were once publicly——"

"Charles, you know your father would never leave the estate to a man who had stood on his trial."

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

Author of "*Dame Durden*," "*Darby and Joan*,"
"*My Lord Consett*," etc.

CHAPTER XVI. "MY LADY OF MOODS."

I THOUGHT she would have been very ill after that long fainting-fit; but the next day she seemed almost herself again—pale, languid, and strangely quiet—but more like Mrs. Carruthers of Templecombe than the passionate little fury of the previous night.

Mr. Carruthers was still in London, and I was glad of it; for I hoped that she would be stronger and better by the time he came home from his Parliamentary duties.

She sent for me to her boudoir in the afternoon, and I found her lying down on the wide, deep, Chesterfield couch. Her dark hair was drawn, in its lovely rippling waves, from off her brow, and hung down in a long, loose plait. The pale, delicate pink of her pretty gown set off her clear, dark skin. She looked so young, so sweet, that, for the life of me, I could only look at her in silent admiration.

"Come and sit down, and we will have some tea, Jane," she said. "I can't stand the boys' noise this afternoon, so I sent them off to the nursery. What a perfect day it has been," she added, as she gazed dreamily at the view through the open window.

The sun was setting over the brow of the wood-covered hills. The blue of the sky, the warmth of the air, the notes of a bird's broken song, all seemed to convey the same impression of peace, and rest, and beauty.

She raised herself on one arm, looking at the view as if she had never seen it before.

"I wish," she said, suddenly, "that beautiful things didn't make me so intensely sad; and, somehow—I don't like being sad. When I was a child, Jane, I was such a merry little thing, wasn't I?"

"Yes, Miss Kate," I answered. "And a wicked little thing, too. Lord! the mischief you contrived to get into; the things you'd invent!"

She smiled, a faint little smile, that had no mirth in it, and in which her eyes had no part.

"Jane," she said, "I am going, for the last, last time, just to give myself up to memory. I—I want you to hear how it all happened. Perhaps you will not blame me so much then. I was mad last night; but I am rational and sensible enough to-day. My heart is quiet; my pulse does not throb. Let us have one more talk together, Jane, and then bury it—and forget."

She lay back again on the cushions. The soft colour came and went in her face.

I poured out some tea and brought her a cup, and she drank it in a mechanical, absent-minded fashion.

"I had better get it over," she said, suddenly. "I have never spoken to any one else. I could not; but you, Jane—well, somehow, you are so different; it is like going back to the old childish days again. I saw how astonished you were that time you came to see me in London, when Reggie brought Mr. Tresyllion in to afternoon tea. Only a month before that we had been strangers. Sometimes I wonder, myself, how we drifted into that cosy, natural intimacy. I can hardly

tell. We seemed to meet everywhere. I suppose he wished it, for he always managed it. And John liked him, and he used often to drop in on Sundays, and the boys were so fond of him, and he had such a way with them—well, you know that, I needn't tell you. And all the time I never dreamt of danger. I thought we were such good friends. My life had been calm and quiet, and it seemed so good to laugh and be happy, and—young, once again; and I always felt that with him. And there was not a word to startle or warn me. I knew he liked to be with me—there was a look in his eyes sometimes—”

Her voice broke. I saw her tremble from head to foot.

“And to think,” she cried, stormily, “to think that it was a lie—a lie—a lie!”

Presently she grew calm, and went on. I thought it best that she should tell her story without interruption.

“I suppose,” she said wearily, “it is never quite safe to be happy. I was happy, unthinkingly, blissfully happy; and I never dreamt of asking myself why. I often wonder what woke me up.”

“Did you wake,” I asked her gently, “before—that afternoon?”

“The night before, I think. We were at a party; he had taken me down to supper. Somehow, it often happened that he did take me down to supper—at parties.”

She stopped abruptly and looked at me, as if the pain of some new thought had struck sharply on her notice.

“To think,” she said in a breathless, frightened way, “to think, Jane, that he will never take me down to supper again; and yet, that all my life, even when I am an old woman—if I live to be one—I shall have to remember those evenings!”

“And this special one?” I asked.

“It was different,” she said, “in some way. There was a subtle, underlying meaning in the words he said, and I did not find it so easy to jest and laugh. What was it he used to call me? ‘My Lady of Moods’? I—I think he wrote a poem on that. He used to quote little bits of it to me just to tease me. I wrote it down once from memory; but I don’t think it is quite right. It was something like this:

What shall I say of her

All that I may of her,

All that is sad of her—sweet in her—glad in her,
Comes to my heart as her name to the lips of me,
Wakens and pulses and thrills every thought of me.

Choose what I could of her,
Think what I would of her,
All that is worst of her—all that is good of her,
Sways me and draws me to love every mood of her,
Changefully changeful—My Lady of Moods!”

“It is very pretty,” I said. “No doubt he has written a dozen like it to Mrs. Gray.”

It was cruel; but it pulled her sharp up from her dreaming fancies to reality and common sense.

“Thank you, Jane,” she said. “No doubt you are right. Well, I have nearly done. That night he was quieter, graver than I had known him ever to be. There was something—or I thought there was something—deeper, more regretful in his eyes and voice.

She leant her head back against the cushion and closed her own eyes. Her lips quivered, then set themselves sternly once more.

“I suppose,” she went on presently, “I had flirted. It did not seem easy that night; but I laughed, and teased, and jested as—as I had always done, and when we left the supper table he began quoting that poem again to tease me; and we went up the stairs and on to the landing, where some seats were. I think there was dancing going on. I remember a waltz strain sounding as he drew me down on to one of the seats with a little imperative gesture. ‘Kate,’ he said; and I was startled and looked at him, and something in his eyes terrified me.

“‘Oh,’ he said in a stifled whisper, ‘if I dared—if I dared—’

“‘Dared what?’ I asked, in some spirit of dare-devilry and recklessness which for the moment had taken possession of me, I think.

“‘Dared misquote one line of that poem,’ he said. ‘But I’m a little bit afraid of ‘My Lady of Moods,’ do you know?’

“‘What,’ I asked, ‘would be the line you would—misquote?’

“I should not have asked. I should not have said it. I—I brought my humiliation on myself. His hand closed on mine. I could hear his heart beat.

“‘It would be this,’ he said, and his voice stole to my ear with the dying strain of the waltz music. ‘Come to my heart as your name to the lips of me.’

“Our eyes met—one quick glance; it said enough—too much. The music ceased and the dancers flocked from the room. I rose, startled, indignant, afraid. That—that was all, Jane.”

"And the next night," I said, "the very next night he was making love to Mrs. Cray."

She sprang up, her eyes and cheeks aflame. "It is good-bye to him now," she cried. "Good-bye to folly, sentiment, blindness, imprudence. I did not mean to be a bad woman, Jane. Heaven knows I did not. I would not deceive my husband knowingly. The drifting was so easy, so pleasant, so safe. But now I am awake; my eyes will never close again on dreams like those."

"I pray to Heaven, not," I cried, and the tears rushed to my own eyes as I looked at her; such a pretty, fragile, little thing, and with her young life tortured and spoilt by a man's selfishness. "Oh, Miss Kate," I said. "Why did you marry—why? I told you love would come. No human fate can defy it. And I knew your nature, your temperament. I knew how passionately and recklessly you could love, if once you let yourself go."

And, oh! the strange, little smile that came to her lips as she wiped her eyes and looked at me.

"But I have not—'let myself go,' Jane," she said.

CHAPTER XVII. A LAST CONFIDENCE.

WE were silent for a long time then. The sun had set; the air was full of sweet scents from the rose-garden below. I could hear the children's voices laughing out in the stillness.

Perhaps that roused her. I don't know; but she sprang suddenly up, and then stood leaning with one hand against the table. Her face was ghastly.

"Miss Kate!" I cried in terror. "You are ill—you—"

"Hush!" she said. "Don't speak for a moment."

I saw her brows contract. Her hand went to her heart. I could hear its dull, laboured beats, in the silence of the quiet room.

At last she looked up and smiled.

"I was almost foolish enough to give way again," she said. "Jane, if you are ever dreadfully unhappy, and you hear a little child's laugh break across your miserable thoughts, you will know what a headache is. I thought mine would have broken, just for a moment."

I have many mental pictures in the gallery of my memory; but among them all there is not one so pathetic, so fair, so

infinitely sad, as the picture of that slight young figure, in its trailing draperies of pink, standing outlined against the faint rose light of the sky, with the anguish of her aching heart so bravely repressed, yet speaking out its mute suffering in the quiver of the pale lips, and the agony of the dark, wild eyes.

"It can't be true," she went on, "that I suffer—I—and for a cause so worthless! Haven't I always treated life as a jest, laughed with it, dreamed with it, sung to it, smiled to it, as—as children do? It is very hard, Jane. I did not think such a little thing could hurt so deeply."

"Perhaps," I said, "it will be sooner over."

She drew herself up to her full height. There was something stately, womanly, about the little wild gipsy thing at that moment.

"Yes," she said, "it must be soon over. I never could bear pain; you know that, Jane. Tell me again that I have been deceived, fooled, humiliated. That helps me; that will cure me. I have not lost my power over myself yet. But if we ever meet—"

"Now, Miss Kate," I said, warningly, as I saw the flash of her eyes, the sudden set of the pretty, soft lips into a hardness and fierceness, that robbed them of all beauty.

"I forgot," she said. "I must not be tragic; it is bad form nowadays. None who respect themselves have anything so uncomfortable as feelings."

She began to pace to and fro the pretty, dainty room, her head bent, her hands loosely clasped behind her.

"I must have it out with myself to-day," she said. "Afterwards, it does not matter. I can take up the old life where it dropped. Surely this won't make such a difference. I have enjoyed living for its own sake up to that first evening. Why shouldn't I enjoy it again? My feelings were never deep—just as variable as my nature. Even he said that, and I was a good actress, I think, Jane, for he never suspected that I—cared."

"No," I said. "If you were always as you were that afternoon in Manchester Square, no one would have suspected you had any sentiment in the matter."

"If I did not betray myself then," she said, eagerly, "I am safe. Oh, Jane, if I thought he knew what I feel—what he has made me feel—I should kill myself! I—I could not meet his eyes again."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

[Continued by

"Then make yourself happy on that point," I said, "for I watched you keenly and closely enough, and, if anything, you seemed rather too cold and indifferent!"

"Oh, I am glad of that!" she said, "I am glad of that!" Then she stopped in her restless walk, and knelt beside me, just as a wild head against my shoulder. I always

"Dear old Jane!" she said. "You have been very good to me, and very patient. I wonder, and she lifted her head and

"Heaven forbid, my dear," I cried. "You have everything to make you so."

"I know that," she said—"I know it too well. Every day of my life I have enumerated my blessings. But it is terrible—oh, Jane, you can't think how

"I can't care about the things that used to please me so, and with real feeling in it—they all seem to me so infinitely sadder than even sorrow

"Quite impossible, my dear," I answered her, thrusting back the rich, dusky hair with my loving hand as though she were my little charge once more, not a great lady with every good gift of fortune in her keeping.

"Do you know," she said presently, "I believe people like to pose as martyrs, even to themselves. It seems to make life more interesting. Perhaps," and her voice dropped into sudden softness again, "that is the reason why unhappy loves are almost always faithful."

"Oh, my dear," I said, "it is only when we are young that we think so much of happiness. Believe me, it is better to have a little comfort that lasts, than a great one that is soon over."

"I dare say you are right," she said. "We think and talk a great deal of happiness, and, after all, what is it? Only a dream of a little less misery in each life."

"No," I said. "Doubtless it is not what we should." "Oh, my dear," she said wearily, "I don't indulge in sentiment. Well," she laughed bitterly, "there will be

no one to afford me the luxury of confidence. I must keep the children with me; they will help. If only Reggie would not talk so much about—him." She rose and went back to the couch, and leant her cheek somewhat wearily against the soft cushions.

"It all seems so long ago," she said; "so terribly long ago. Feelings age more than years, do they not, Jane?"

"It seems so strange," she went on, presently, "to feel like this when one has been so unmoved and indifferent so long, that one had no fear of—of such a possibility. I had heard the girls at school talk of their loves, and sentimentalise over their emotions. But it always seemed to me that I hadn't any. I couldn't understand it's being in any human being's power to make you happy or—wretched. And my future seemed all so safe and settled, and now—"

A little low sob choked the words, but her eyes were dry and strangely bright. "I despise him enough, Heaven knows," she said. "Oh, why did he do it? Why? It was so cruel, so heartless, so—"

"So manlike," I said, bitterly. She dropped her hand and looked at me. "Poor Jane," she said, "you have suffered too. It seems the lot of women, doesn't it?"

"Yes," I said, "it always will be as long as they have anything to do with men."

"You loved your husband and he treated you badly. Your fate is worse than mine. John is so good to me—so good. That is just the one reproach my life is always uttering."

"I think, my dear," I said, "we have talked enough of this for one day. Try and rouse yourself to your old life and duties. It will be hard, but it is better than giving way to morbid fancies and dreams that, after all, can come to nothing."

"Oh, wise old Jane!" she said, with something of the old, bright mockery in glance and voice. "Of course I know you are right. But I am only taking a last indulgence. After to-day—"

Then suddenly her head sank on her clasped hands. The words ended with a sob, like that of a little child over a task that it finds too hard.

"Oh, don't, my dear," I entreated, "don't. I would rather see you mad, furious, passionate, as you were last night, than—this."

"I can't help it, Jane," she said. "I

am weaker than I thought, and this is a new experience; I am not used to it—yet.”

So I let her cry. What else could I do, knowing, too, that a woman's tears are at once a safeguard, and an outlet for her feelings; but all the same it wrung my heart to see her, and to hear those wild, terrible, panting sobs that seemed to tear the very life out of her breast, and left her at last spent and exhausted, and utterly helpless, so that I could only lay her back on the couch, and watch her in silent misery as she rested there on the white pillows.

The next day I bade her good-bye. I was obliged to go to my new situation; and somehow, sorry as I was to leave her, I thought it would be better for her to have no one at hand to talk to about this matter.

It would surely wear itself out. She was such a proud, wilful little creature. It was impossible but that she should soon despise and hate a man who had treated her so shamefully as Mr. Tresyllion had done.

And then, all in a moment, like a lightning flash, something seemed to tell me that I had not been quite honest with her when I told her the story of Mrs. Cray. After all, he had not made love; it had been all on the other side. I could not recall a single word of endearment or encouragement on his part.

Mrs. Cray had absolutely flung herself at his head; wooed him desperately, madly. He was young, impulsive, passionate. What could one expect of any man under such circumstances? The very hopelessness of his regard for Miss Kate might have driven him to the desperate remedy of seeking consolation in the arms of another woman. He would not have been the first who had done it.

Still, true or false, the story must be left now to serve its purpose. Better—a million times better—that she should think him worthless, than picture him as loving her, suffering for her, dreaming of her, as she had dreamt of him.

“In a year,” I told myself, “it will be all over and forgotten on both sides, and they will be glad of the escape. What could come of it? How would it end? Heaven keep them apart until the madness is conquered.”

And it never occurred to me that it could be anything but conquered, or that the fact of conquering could be anything but a question of time for either, or for both.

It seems such a very easy thing to judge of other people, and to settle their affairs for them. But if it is easy, it is not often safe.

OLD KENSINGTON.

KNIGHTS, Barons, and Earls, and the bearers of every other title of dignity—Kings, Queens, and multitudes of Princesses—have passed along this narrow way that leads to Kensington; but who the particular Knight may have been who gave a name to Knightsbridge, there is no evidence to show. But here comes to an end the stately thoroughfare we have followed past the noble dwellings, the fine club houses, the handsome shops of Piccadilly; past the corner thronged with carriages, where “the Duke” is once more in evidence as the presiding genius of the scene; past the park railings, where through a screen of leafless boughs, appears a procession of horsewomen and horsemen, cantering along the ride. Then the grand highway is transformed into two narrow streets, and, at the point where they branch off, appears a cluster of hoarding and temporary buildings which are in strange contrast to the new buildings that are rising in every direction round about. One way leads to Brompton—if there be still a Brompton—happy Bohemian Brompton, the favoured abode of artists, *littérateurs*, musicians, and actors, but now almost improved off the face of the earth, and converted into vigorous respectability as South Kensington. A little further on, the once jolly, noisy, chaffering Brompton Road becomes the Cromwell Road.

But all this region, although it may be Kensington in a parochial sense, is not the Old Kensington we have in view, so we may even hie back to Knightsbridge and take the other way, where the great mass of the red brick barracks towers overhead. Are the great gates ever thrown back, and do the glittering squadrons ever issue out, with hundreds of iron hoofs thundering noisily under the archway? Presumably, the Guards ride out the other way, for rarely are the big gates open; but a wicket gate in one of the battants frequently is, and lets in or lets out some tall warrior in a scarlet shell, or a young woman with a bundle, or a serjeant's wife with a perambulator or market basket, or other unwarlike figures.

After the straits of Knightsbridge are

past, we are in grandeur once more: the broad highway, lined on one side with the houses of estate and dignity, and on the other with the glades and thickets of park and gardens, with the gilded Albert Memorial glowing from its brilliant shrine. It is the Gore, though why and how the Gore nobody seems to know.

Back in the dark, by Brompton Park,
He turned up through the Gore,

says Gay, in an excellent new ballad to the tune of "Chevy Chase."

And Brompton Park was just behind us, in the district now known as Prince's Gate, where only a faint memory of it is preserved in Park House; but it was the site of perhaps the oldest and most famous nursery-ground in the kingdom, which Addison visited and made copy of for the "Spectator." And Kingston House, close by, is really a fine, old heavy mansion of Queen Anne's days, built by the rather notorious Duchess of Kingston. She married, first, romantically and clandestinely, a well-born but penniless young sailor, and then, prosaically and openly, the rich and elderly Duke of Kingston, who, doting on his young bride, left her all his immense fortune. The penniless sailor, by a marvellous turn of fortune's wheel, became Earl of Bristol, and made a stir about the matter, and there was a grand State trial of the Duchess for bigamy, which resulted in a conviction. But the verdict, which deprived her of her status as Duchess, did not affect her fortune, and my lady Kingston, turning her back upon a country where she had been treated so ungallantly, carried her handsome person and her wealth to foreign parts, where she shone with unabated brilliance.

Always in literary annals the Gore will be noted for Gore House, destroyed in clearing the site for the Albert Hall. It was for long a literary centre, where the Countess of Blessington and her step-son-in-law, Count D'Orsay, the "Admirable Crichton" of his period, kept a hospitable table for litterateurs and dandies, and especially for those who affected to be both one and the other. Louis Napoleon, the future Emperor, was, for long years, one of the intimates at Gore House, and when the establishment finally collapsed in 1849, carried by storm by importunate creditors, the unfortunate pair, neither of whom was adapted to face the stern realities of evil fortune, fled to Paris, where their late guest was now assuming his rôle of "Saviour of Society." Disappointment followed

upon their hopes; there was no share for them of the brightness of the new Empire, and the latter days of the charming Countess and the most accomplished of dandies soon came to an end in the night of poverty and obscurity. Gore House then became a restaurant for the Exhibition of 1851, when Alexis Soyer presided as "cordon bleu."

Ah! what was the scene in the days of that great Exhibition which brought all the world to London, and sent it rolling down the Gore?

Before that date the background of the Gore was a maze of groves, and farms, and market-gardens. Farmers and market-gardeners had their business about Earl's Court and Old Brompton; ploughs creaked slowly along where now dash the equipages of the great, the omnibus of the multitude, and everybody's hansom. With the Exhibition began the great change which has hereabouts almost swept away the landmarks of Old Kensington.

A little further on once stood Kensington House; a dull, old brick mansion that was once occupied by Louise de Querouailles, the beautiful mistress of Charles the Second, and of some fame later on as a Jesuit school. But that was pulled down, with Colby House adjoining, to make room for a mansion which was to be one of the grandest of modern times. The house rose like a vision; its broad façade dominated Kensington Gardens, so that from the Broad Walk it seemed as though they belonged to the new house rather than to that obscure old place in the corner. A whole colony of Irish were displaced, a rookery turned into a lake and pleasure ground, a gallery of modern pictures bought regardless of cost, together with statuary, carvings in wood and stone, elaborate staircases of coloured marbles; nothing that wealth could procure was lacking for the adornment of this sumptuous abode. Altogether, it is said, the house and its accessories cost a million of money, but it was never inhabited. When the fortunes of its author declined, it was found too costly and too comfortless for club-house or hotel, and finally was pulled down, and its materials scattered to the four winds; the marble staircase going to the new "Tussaud's." And now there is a handsome square and terrace on the site of the lake and gardens, and of the magnificent Palace of Croesus.

As the Kensington High Street is reached, the scene still recalls the features of the ancient village. The gracious curve

of the highway, the irregular roofs and elevations suggest the old-fashioned High Street of a country town; but, nevertheless, here is but another Piccadilly, with shop-fronts and buildings that may jostle with Regent Street, or Bond Street, and with as gay and varied a throng of feminine costumes.

Above us rises the handsome tower of Kensington Church, which, modern as it is, seems suggestive rather of the ancient days when the De Veres were lords paramount hereabouts. It is still Saint Mary Abbot's, and the name recalls how one of the earliest of the De Veres, for the good of his soul, and of the souls of his ancestors and descendants, endowed the ancient Abbey of Abingdon with church and adjacent lands, which became a kind of subsidiary manor to that where the Earl's court was still held, and was known as Abbot's Kensington. The old brick church, square, and quaint, and ugly, which many people, not yet beyond middle age, can remember, was in itself nothing to regret, and yet it harmonised with its surroundings, and seemed to bring back the "Queen Anne" and "King George" associations of the place. The little nook between the churchyard and the High Street, at the corner where the omnibuses stop, was once the site of the parish stocks; the parish pump was not far off, perhaps under that old archway which is still a feature of the scene, translated into the modern masonry of the new Police-station. Here people would gather who intended travelling up to London, and a bell would be rung so that people might know that a convoy was about to start in that direction along the dark and lonely way, where footpads might lurk, or highwaymen be in ambush.

Even now a glance up Church Street, that curves up the hill beside the church, gives a faint impression of rural belongings; and you cannot help thinking that over the brow of the hill there must open out a view of fields, hedgerows, and copes. And half a century ago we might have found it so; have gathered nuts in Notting Hill, and enjoyed that prospect from the eminence which Faulkner declares to be equal to any in the vicinity of London. "From the church," writes Bowack, in 1705, "runs a row of buildings towards the north, called Church Lane; but the most beautiful part of it" (Kensington) "is the square, which, for beauty of buildings and worthy inhabitants, may vie with the most noted London squares."

And Kensington Square is still worth a visit. Take one of the turnings out of the High Street opposite the church, and you find yourself in another kind of world. Tall old-fashioned houses blink kindly down upon you; each has its own character, its own angle of roof, its distinguishing height, its particular doorway. Here the firelight gleams through the tall windows, and lights up the solid oak panelling within; there the roomy portals seem about to open to give egress to Clarissa and Belinda. My Lady Castlewood lodged in Kensington Square, you will remember; and at the "Greyhound," over against her ladyship's house, Harry Esmond kept watch all night, lest the Prince should escape, and slip after Mistress Beatrice. Well, there is the "Greyhound" sure enough, still filling and drawing; and the whole surely seems as real to us as any of the actual denizens of the square. Only, somehow, the figure of the novelist himself seems also to be present, as he strolls homeward from the club. Thackeray ought to have lived in the square, in full harmony with the age which he loved so well to paint; instead of which, he had his own house in Palace Gardens, with as much character about it as a churchyard monument. But in a corner, yonder, lived that famous, tedious old physician and poet, Sir Richard Blackmore; and many of the wits who made money at his expense, must have envied him his dignified lodging. Addison lived here for a while; and the Duchess of Mazarin, before she settled at Chelsea. Then would the gilt coaches be rolling this way; and at night would the square be lit up smokily by the flaring links; then would the chair-men jostle each other, with their freights of beauty helpless within the glass-chairs; then would coachmen wrangle, and lacqueys dispute, while all the quiet people of the square, the deans and bishops—for the square was always the resort of the dignified clergy—would anathematise the din and racket. Probably the Duchess got notice to quit, for she was no favourite at Kensington Palace, and bishoprics and deaneries no longer came her way. But those who loved the basset-table, high play, good living, wit, and jollity, were always of her faction.

Through all the old square has kept up its dignity. There is an air about it that passeth fashion. There are convents all about, and sisterhoods, whose presence gives the place a quiet, sombre air, except

when the boys from the grammar school come trooping out, or the girl-graduates of the future gather about the portals of their college.

Of old, quiet Kensington, Hornton Street is one of the survivals, with its old-fashioned, russet-red brick houses; and here lived Dr. Dibdin, the bibliophile and collector, who is interesting as being the nephew of Charles, the author of the famous sea-songs. And Hornton Street leads "to Campden Hill so high," which is indeed the highest point in the immediate neighbourhood of London.

Old Campden House was built by Baptist Hicks, in the year 1612, and took its title, like its builder who was made Viscount Campden, from another Campden among the Gloucestershire wolds. The worthy silk mercer will always be famous—that is, as long as people are committed for trial at the sessions—as the builder of the original Hicks's Hall, or Clerkenwell Sessions House. But he was a vigorous builder on many another field, with fantastic notions of his own that left their mark in his buildings. It is said that Hicks won the site of Campden House from Walter Cope, the owner of the manor, at play; or more probably got it from him in a deal, for Hicks was hardly a gambler, but an excellent hand at a bargain. Anyhow, there was never any great extent of ground belonging to it, and it was soon abandoned as a residence by the noble lord, who had acquired it by marriage with the heiress of the Campdens, and was let on terms to occupants more or less distinguished.

The Princess of Denmark, afterwards Queen Anne, occupied the place for awhile, and after her the Countess of Burlington, with her son, Richard Boyle, of air-pump fame. In later times, the house was occupied as a school; but through all it remained in pretty much its pristine condition, till it found a tenant to appreciate its beauties, and fit it up after the antique fashion, when, alas! the old place caught fire—this was in 1862—and was burnt to the ground. It was built up again soon after, but has lost its antiquarian interest, although skilfully restored.

Close by is Holly Lodge, where Macaulay wrote much of his "History," and where he died, at last, in 1859, and where everything remains almost unaltered, as to the disposition of the grounds, and of those lawns and shrubberies which were his rest and refreshment. An observatory was

near at hand, Sir James South's, which has given its name to Observatory Lane. All about, and well housed, too, is a colony of Scotchmen, who find the air of Campden Hill the next best to that of their native heather, and who seem to have camped themselves about their great chieftain, the Maccallum Mohr. Then there is the high water-tower crowning everything; and scattered studios here and there; and houses with the individual characters of artistic owners marked upon them.

On the other side of the slope were once the Kensington gravel-pits, which extended over what is now Notting Hill. At one time this was a great health resort for the Londoners, till they learnt to go further afield.

But Notting Hill is Kensington in no other than a parochial sense, while the Palace and Gardens, although parochially in Saint Margaret's, Westminster, belong to Kensington, to the Old Court suburb, by ties stronger than those of assessments or rates. So let our route bring us round to the dull red-brick palace of the Dutch Hanoverian fashion, that looks over the wide avenues of Kensington Gardens.

Although proud of its connection with the Court, Kensington cannot boast that this is of very ancient date. The Palace was no ancient seat of royalty, but originally was a plain, handsome villa belonging to Finch, Earl of Nottingham, from whom William the Third bought it, liking the soft, mild air, and the stretch of meadow and park land in front of it. Old Whitehall had then been destroyed by fire, and Saint James's was but a poor kind of residence; so henceforth the Court took up its town abode at Kensington. If people grumbled, who had been accustomed to see their Monarch taking his pleasures, and holding his state among them, William did not care. Nor was it more to the purpose that officials grumbled who had to ride backwards and forwards between Whitehall, and Westminster, and Kensington. But the road, if bad, was lighted with lamps—oil-lamps, with glazed lights—which were established between Kensington and Whitehall, as early as 1694. And this feeble line of flickering oil-lamps was then thought to have a wondrous festal glitter and courtly brilliance about it. But when the Court was away, there were no more lamps, and people had to scramble to and fro as they best could.

William presently turned Lord Nottingham's neat villa into something more like

a Palace. Christopher Wren had a touch at it here and there. He it was who built the orangery for Queen Anne. The eastern front was added by George the First from Kent's designs. George the Second added a new wing to form a nursery. But the old place has known no very violent changes, and still gives the appearance of such a homely Dutch château as would content its original builder.

William and Mary both died at Kensington Palace; and also their successor, Anne, the death of the latter being marked by the bold coup d'état by which the Whig lords overpowered the Jacobite conspiracy, and proclaimed George of Hanover, an incident which Thackeray has turned to account in "Esmond."

The reign of George the Second was the period when Kensington was in its palmiest state. Caroline, the Queen, liked the place; she gave orders about the gardens, extending, planting, digging, here creating a miniature lake, and there turning the marshy brook of Tyburn into a fine serpentine canal. But when George the Third came to the throne, the Court came no more to Kensington. Still, there were Royal personages about. Princes and Princesses had apartments in the palace; and, in the fulness of time, the Duke and Duchess of Kent took up their abode in the palace, and their daughter, Victoria, was born there.

The State Apartments still remain in their trappings of faded tapestry, and the scanty furniture of little value. There are grand staircases of black and white marble, with balusters of fine twisted iron. Presence Chamber, the King's great drawing-room, the Queen's gallery, closets, and withdrawing-rooms, all are there; but there has been no Royal presence to set the whole Court apparatus at work for a century and a quarter. It was on the morning of the twenty-fifth of October, 1760, that a heavy fall was heard in the King's apartments in Kensington Palace, soon after breakfast. The page in attendance rushed into the room. The King lay on the floor senseless. He was dead; he had expired in a moment. There was no more of Kensington after that as a seat of the Court; and thus it has remained ever since in the condition of a Royal dower-house.

By the palace gates, into the High Street, there are still soldiers and sentries about the old barracks; and a three-cornered green, where the men sometimes take

their diversion in the way of quoits or throwing the hammer. And close by the gateway stands the "King's Arms," once thronged by gentlemen of the Court; and, if Thackeray may be trusted, the scene of plot and counterplot, in stirring Jacobite times.

KING CARNIVAL

SAINT VALENTINE is going out in Canada and King Carnival is coming in. February, the hardest, and, often, coldest month of the Canadian winter, is devoted to the service of the jolly monarch, at about the season when the good old Saint once held supreme sway. Youthful hearts, in the New World at least, no longer palpitate over Cupid's flowery missives, that milder excitement is superseded by a newer and far more engrossing one—the great "Canadian Carnival."

The old adage that, "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," has become an oft-quoted text of the Canadian pleasure creed, and has been aptly illustrated by more than one gigantic holiday display within the last few years. One fancies the severity of the climate has been impugned, else how could the citizens of Montreal almost live out of doors for the space of an entire week? Offices are closed; business, wherever possible, completely abandoned; moon-light, torch-light, bonfire-light everywhere turns night into day.

The icy streets blaze with colour; for not only all the Snow-shoe Clubs deem it a point of honour to wear the blanket costume about the streets during "Carnival Week," but numerous private individuals do likewise, not of course wearing club colours, but as each allows his fancy free scope, a rainbow variety of hues in dress is the result. The material which composes these picturesque costumes consists of blankets; it may be dyed red, blue, green, or orange, purple, or even black. White is, however, the most popular, and by far the most tasteful. The whole city seems to be given up at this period to the mad pursuit of pleasure; but it is pleasure of a healthful, innocent kind. Nothing is more common than to see a staid citizen, of mature age and high commercial standing, appear in festive snow-shoe costume, his grey hair crowned with a jaunty capuchin, with tassels streaming behind him in the wind; his waist tied round with the gayest of sashes; his feet encased in embroidered

moccasins. He is tearing off to the nearest toboggan "slide" to enjoy the fun, with a heart apparently as light as any school-boy's.

The general features of Canadian Carnivals are of course yearly repeated, with the necessary alterations to suit the occasion. For instance, the members of the Montreal Snow-shoe Clubs paid Lord Lansdowne a graceful compliment, besides giving him a loyal welcome, when their "Snow-shoe Arch" (always a noticeable feature of each carnival) displayed the Lansdowne coat of arms—a bee-hive. This surmounted the arch, and was composed of men in snow-shoe costume, each row diminishing in number till the last three completed the oval. The effect was very fine; the opposing colours, worn by the different clubs, were harmoniously blended by the greater proportion of white. The soft sky-blue blankets of the "Trappeur" Club were very conspicuous, and attracted almost as much admiration as the giant circle of snow-shoes, built on each side of the living beehive and crowned with toboggans. A more thoroughly winter scene it would be impossible to imagine, and it was picturesque in the extreme.

But the crown of Canadian Carnivals is undoubtedly the "Ice Palace." This is more than picturesque. This is the very poetry of architecture. Its lofty towers and embattled walls stand out against the pearl-grey sky, blue as an iceberg in an arctic sea; its delicate beauty is a perpetual marvel in contrast with the solidity of the material of which it is composed. Again, it should be seen at sunset, when a background of purple sky, fast warming into pale crimson, floods with colour the gleaming columns, and makes each separate ice-block glow with an eye of fire; lastly, it may be seen upreared against a moonlight sky, dark, by contrast, with those walls and towers of soft yet dazzling light. One could imagine it was built of moonbeams and water; nothing less ethereal could fashion such a fairy dream.

On the third night of the Carnival the storming of the Ice Palace takes place. The central tower sends up volley after volley of fiery balls and showers of sparks. The smoke of the fireworks, rolling upwards, gives it the appearance of a castle besieged in the clouds, that keep turning to a deep, rose-coloured mist, through which gleams the great white edifice. Then, on the edge of this central magnificence, glows the red circle of the snow-shoe torch-

bearers who are storming the forts. Many hundreds of men they number, extending round the vast square fronting the "Windsor Hotel," and up the long streets they stretch, even to the very centre of Mount Royal. A giant, writhing, fiery serpent they look, in the distance, to those who have climbed the mountain to view the scene from above; but to those who stand in the city below, this snow-shoe torch procession, with its many-coloured lights, looks exactly like a jewelled necklace wound round and round the white skirts of the mountain.

On one occasion the medical students of McGill University formed a counter procession, and, headed by some enterprising spirits, rushed down into the Ice Palace, and with the aid of the fireworks they carried in with them, held it for some time against more than fourteen hundred men, to the astonishment of the returning army—who were quite unprepared for this manoeuvre—and the intense delight of the Montreal citizens.

When the snow-shoe torch procession reaches the highest point on Mount Royal, rose-red lights are burned, accompanied by a grand pyrotechnic display. The appearance of the mountain at this moment—a mighty mass of pure white snow against a background of crimson fire—is indescribable. Then come the torch-bearers, marching down the steep ravine and filing round the bends in the roads to join their companions in the terraces below—a wheel within a wheel of living fire, that melts into one long zigzag chain traversing the city, ending in the central diamond, the Ice Palace.

The skating masquerade at the Victoria Rink is, in the opinion of many, the most delightful event of this holiday programme. The rink has a slanting roof, supported on each side by rows of wooden rafters; these are covered with the flags of all nations, and the long lines of gay bunting are reflected, as in a mirror, on the great ice sheets below, so that the skater seems to be gliding over a flag carpet. Sometimes an ice-grotto is built in the centre, the pillars of which catch every ray of light as in a prism; and upon the polished surface of the columns and down their transparent interior, dance ten thousand specks of rainbow hue. Within the basin of the grotto a fountain leaps upward, its spray one moment silvery as imprisoned moonbeams, the next an azure foam, with an orange heart; and then rose-

red like summer dawn ; and yet once more pale-green as sun-set sea.

May-poles are planted at each end of the rink, from which float long parti-coloured ribbons. The skaters form themselves in circles round these poles, each one seizes an end of ribbon, and, moving in and out of each other, after the fashion of a cotillon, they plait the ribbons. Then follow the "Lancers," which are executed with wonderful grace and skill. Only the most accomplished skaters are selected for this fancy skating ; but Canada abounds in good skaters of both sexes.

The entertainment opens in a most impressive manner ; the doors at the lower end are flung open, the band plays the National Anthem, and on the skaters come in one resistless throng, hundred after hundred, the most astonishing assembly of the splendid and the grotesque. Art amounts to positive genius in many of the dresses. There a huge black eagle swoops by, surrounded by a horde of carnival devils, all masked, and probably composed of the élite of the city. Yonder is a troop of fair ladies in the dress of the Georgian Court. Saxon Hereward is to be seen arm in arm with a Leadville miner, who has wound round his St. Ann's pyramid-hat a cotton spotted handkerchief. European princes, Arab chiefs, a dear little Quakeress waltzing with Mephistopheles, "Sairey Gamp" in the arms of a cavalry officer, a beautiful Queen "doing the roll" with a policeman ; these and many others fly by upon a floor slippery as glass, and shod with steel that glances like a diamond in the sunlight. A group of fishermen, clad in tarpaulin, in company with "Uncle Sam," distribute cards freely among the crowd, worded as follows :

"We have much pleasure in informing the general public o-fish-ally, that, after mature deliberation, the price of red herrings will remain the same.

"CHAMBERLAIN, TUPPER, AND CO."

Such political hits are not uncommon ; and, of course, add zest to the entertainment.

Later on the skaters divide in long lines to form a passage on the ice, up which, with bursts of music, and flashes of light from the illuminated fountain, are ushered the Governor-General and his suite ; and seated beneath the canopy, at the upper end of the rink, they appear to be as much charmed as the rest of the world with the brilliant, and, to many, novel spectacle of a Canadian Skating Masquerade.

We now come to the cream of Canadian winter sports—tobogganing. A "slide" is frequently built upon a natural slope, on the top of which is erected a huge wooden platform, sometimes thirty-five feet in height. The entire length of the "slide" is about fourteen hundred yards. It is well covered with snow, watered freely, and allowed to freeze, which makes the track one long sheet of ice, smooth as glass. The upper part is encircled with a railing, and divided into six passages ; two by which the toboggans descend, a path on each side for those going up the hill, and a narrower passage in which to drag the toboggan.

It is a pretty sight to see a toboggan hill brilliantly illuminated with Chinese lanterns, an enormous bonfire at the foot of the hill painting in crimson a landscape of snow. Hark ! what is that indescribable swishing sound ! A toboggan ; on it comes like an infant tornado ; and, before any one has time to realise it is passing, it is lost in the depths below, a mere speck upon the distant whiteness of the road.

"It looks awful," is the comment of some Carnival visitor ; yet he is, nevertheless, burning to try it.

He does try it, and strangely blended with the thrill of apprehension, that naturally accompanies a first slide, is a glow of ecstatic delight. When the steerer gave that final hoist to the toboggan, the novice knows he was in for it, and clenches his teeth hard, and almost says a prayer—he seems to be rushing on the wings of a mighty wind right out of the world. But the marvel is, he enjoys it keenly, and rises from the toboggan with a long sigh of bliss. He feels at that moment that life henceforth is too short to get in enough slides. The enthusiasm and excitement with which Montreal visitors plunge into this amusement directly they arrive in the city, is extremely diverting. Ladies, clad in rich silk, satin, and sealskin—a sure sign they are quite unaccustomed to the pastime—rise from the toboggans at the foot of the slide, and tear up the hill again, eager for a second taste of the delightful novelty. Gentlemen, in plug hats, tied down with furry ears—no doubt models of sober business habits, in the cities from whence they came—rush up the hill like boys upon a frolic, in an agony lest they should be kept waiting for their "turn," for as there are on these occasions a very large number of pleasure-seekers, no one can take a slide whenever he wants to. The

crush on the platform is very great, and each takes his place at the top of the slide in turn, in the same way as if he were being admitted by ticket to some crowded entertainment.

The "Citizens' Drive" is always popular; but a great many more take part in the procession than its name implies. There are the luxurious sleighs, glossy robes, and high-stepping horses of the wealthy side by side with the "habitan" from his French farm, with his rough little Canadian pony, and his old-fashioned box-sleigh. Another sleigh passes, fashioned like a huge boat, on the side of which is emblazoned "Kingfisher." It is drawn by six or eight prancing horses, and contains fifty or sixty people. And there are two young swells to be seen, driving a magnificent pair, with coloured reins, and chime of silvery bells, harnessed to a feather of a toboggan, with two snowshoes, tied with ribbons and crossed, for a dash-board. But if one were to go on filling in details, the "Drive" would demand a special sketch. It must only be mentioned in passing as one of the strong points on the Carnival programme.

But we must go home through "the Pines," now—the great snow-shoe meeting-ground for clubs both public and private. It is a tract of woodland, waste and wild; where the tall pines rear themselves in solitary grandeur, leaning against the snow their dark mantles of perpetual green. Through the renowned "Gully" we pass. Now look at the city far below, flashing with myriads of lights; the Ice Palace, in that dim distance, more like a new-fallen moon than any building formed by man. Below the city sweeps the river, now one rift of whiteness, broken only by the majestic line of the Victoria Bridge. A fiery eye glows on the opposite shore: it is the engine of the ice railway, with its long line of cars, crossing the mighty breast of the frozen giant. And still beyond, rise the great mountains Belle Isle and Rouge-mont, massing themselves in gloom and grandeur against the horizon, whilst overhead broods the solemn, shining silence of the stars.

THE ORETOWN BANK ROBBERY.

THE Bank had been robbed! Such was the discovery made by Mr. Ebenezer Grubb, late one Saturday night, and the information was obtained in this wise: Frank

Jackson, a junior clerk, who lodged on the opposite side of the street, a little distance down, was sitting that evening at his window. He lingered over a quiet pipe, listlessly watching the passers-by, and dusk crept on unnoticed by him. He was about to draw the blinds and light the gas, when two men passed on the other side, one of them pausing and looking up towards his window, while the other went on to the Bank and knocked at the private door. The young man's curiosity was aroused upon seeing the one who remained enter a doorway, as if for concealment; so, standing behind a curtain, he watched them.

The dull, grey front of the Bank was lit by a street-lamp, and as the man who knocked turned round while waiting, Jackson recognised Mark Seeley, the senior cashier. After a little delay the door was opened by the resident porter, and he and Seeley entered the building. In a minute or two they came out again, and the porter went towards a cross-street, while the cashier stood at the door, apparently awaiting his return. However, no sooner had the man turned a corner than Seeley again went in, and his companion hurried towards the Bank. As the lamplight fell upon him, Frank recognised another of the clerks, an intimate of Seeley's, named Williams. They reappeared in two or three minutes, and Williams, carrying in each hand a small Gladstone bag, hastened down a by-street, and was out of sight before the porter returned. Then, after a minute the cashier took the same direction.

Jackson was puzzled to explain these movements, especially as Williams had a couple of days' leave, and was supposed to be far from Oretown. Seeley was a high and well-paid officer, possessing the entire confidence of his employers. Frank sometimes thought that confidence misplaced. At all events, he had reason to believe that both men speculated in stocks; a practice which the partners strictly forbade to their staff.

It was only a few days before, that one of the clerks, glancing through an evening paper, cried: "Hallo! 'El Dorados' are gone down to nothing; the affair is a complete smash! By Jove, I know a fellow who had some of them." Jackson noticed Seeley turn white; the hand that held the pen shook, and he turned round to speak in a whisper to Williams, who listened with a dazed look on his face.

Frank felt uneasy. He knew nothing certain, and it was an unpleasant task to

mention his suspicions to his employers; however, he determined to do so, and at once set off to seek Mr. Ebenezer Grubb.

Hardly knowing what result to hope for; dreading Mr. Grubb's annoyance on the one hand, if his suspicions were wrong, and fearing robbery on the other, Frank accompanied the principal to the Bank. Mr. Ebenezer walked straight to the strong-room, and opened it with his private keys, and then throwing open the chest in which the cash was kept, proceeded to examine its contents. A gas-jet just above them threw a bright light into the recesses of the safe, and showed the banker some parcels of bonds, a small pile of silver and copper, and nothing more.

The chief clerk, an old man, who, as well as the porter, lived on the premises, was by this time on the spot, and held open a cash-book.

"There should be there," he said, in an agitated voice, in reply to Mr. Grubb's question, "thirty-one thousand six hundred and seventeen pounds, eight shillings and ninepence."

There was no sign of force having been used; and the chief clerk produced his key, which he averred had not left his hands since the safe was locked that afternoon, when the money was certainly there. Mr. Seeley often borrowed it during business hours. With that exception, he never lost sight of it.

The porter returned to say that Mr. Seeley was not expected home until Monday morning; and the man explained that the cashier called that evening for something he forgot in his desk, and sent him on an errand which occupied perhaps ten minutes.

There hardly remained a doubt that the two clerks were the culprits; and Mr. Grubb at once placed the matter in the hands of the police.

Frank Jackson long lay awake that night, wondering whether the events of the past few hours would bring him promotion; and if so, what effect it would have on a certain cherished scheme of his.

Six or eight months before, he had met at a picnic Mary Grubb, the junior partner's daughter, a fair, winsome little thing, with dimpled cheeks, and eyes soft as those of a fawn. She had just returned from school; and before Frank knew who she was, he admired her. Upon learning that she was Mr. Ebenezer's only child, he was keenly disappointed, for the daughter of

the wealthy banker was, he feared, beyond his reach. In spite of this, his attentions were not diminished; and, before the day was at an end, he adored her. She received his little services with marked favour, he thought; and even sober reflection could not prevent him from entertaining hopes which any one but a lover would have considered wild.

Mary often drove down for her father, and it generally fell to Frank's lot to take a message out, asking her to wait, or to call again, which furnished opportunities for a pressure of the hand and a few words. He was not endowed with an undue amount of vanity; but he could not help seeing that on these occasions her eye brightened, and a vivid blush sprang to her cheek; and he could not help thinking that, if his happiness depended on her, it would not be long deferred. But the social gulf between them kept his lips sealed. The events of the evening would probably bring him promotion, and he wondered if they would bring him nearer to Mary. His thoughts flew from her to the robbery, and back again, until sleep deserted him, and his brain grew dizzy.

Suddenly a thought flashed through his mind; and, in the midst of the dark room, on the walls, on the ceiling, there appeared before him, as in letters of fire, a remark of Seeley's, uttered months before.

Some of the clerks were discussing the arrest of a dishonest bank-clerk, and Seeley said, laughingly: "If fellows will do that kind of thing, they ought at least to show some common sense in their method of escape. If he had gone to some quiet seaport, hired or bought a yacht, and sailed quietly off, he would now be enjoying himself in safety."

The tone, the cynical laugh rang in Frank's ears, and it occurred to him that Seeley would probably adopt some such course. Twenty miles away, on a branch line, stood Northport, a yachting centre; and Williams might easily, on the previous day, have arranged for their flight.

Early on Sunday morning he called on Mr. Grubb to inform him of this idea, which, by being dwelt upon, had become a conviction. As Frank entered the banker's study Mary left it, her face pale and her eyes red, and Mr. Ebenezer himself sat listlessly in an easy-chair looking haggard.

"Above all," said the latter, when Jackson had finished what he went there to say, "silence about this wretched affair is

necessary for the present. I do not mind telling you that it has occurred at a rather unfortunate moment, as we shall be obliged to get accommodation, and to pay a heavy price for it; and if the story of the robbery leaks out prematurely, we may be ruined."

The young man was flattered by the confidence, and, as he looked at the weary face and heavy eyes, eloquent of anxiety and sleeplessness, and remembered Mary's troubled features, a feeling of wrath against those who caused all this grief possessed him.

After a short silence, Mr. Grubb said:

"Perhaps you would not mind running over to Northport yourself and making enquiries. I have faith in your shrewdness, and shall give you a letter to an old friend of ours, a magistrate there, who will help you if necessary. Here is some money, and remember, my lad, that time is of vital importance."

The trust made Frank colour with pride. His first hope was that fortune might make him instrumental in saving his employers from disaster; but he may be pardoned if there also entered into his mind a wish to earn a smile from Mary, as well as her father's gratitude.

A few enquiries among the Northport police and the loungers on the beach, satisfied him that his surmises were correct. Some days before two gentlemen, whose description tallied with that of the runaways, bought a small schooner-yacht from a local builder. The crew were ordered to hold themselves in readiness, stores were shipped, and the new owners arrived by the last train on the previous night. They met the seller on board, paid the purchase money, and at once sailed—for a month's cruise, they said.

"I have an urgent message for them," said Frank, to an old salt. "Would it be possible to get a fast steamer here and overtake them?"

"Well, sir, ef 'ee could borry that thur craft," pointing to a small, rakish-looking steamer, whose brass fittings gleamed in the morning sun, "yes. They must 'a' gone south; and her'll go nigh on to twenty knots an hour."

Frank looked longingly at the vessel; and upon hearing the name of the owner, his heart bounded. It was the person to whom Mr. Grubb's letter was addressed.

"I fear yours is a wild-goose chase," said that gentleman, when the young clerk had told his story and explained his

wishes. "However, the Grubbs are dear old friends, and the 'Lorna' is at your service. Come with me, and I shall give directions to the master."

In little more than an hour the "Lorna" was steaming swiftly out of the harbour, and Frank, standing on the bridge beside the captain, felt almost intoxicated as the vessel's head rose and fell, and a fresh breeze blew across the sunlit sea, fanning his hot brow.

"There was a light nor'-west wind all night," remarked the captain; "and if we say they're eighty or ninety miles ahead we shan't be far out. I don't suppose we'll overtake her before dark," the captain went on, "so we'd better take it easy, lest we might pass 'em in the night."

They left their course several times, in order to make enquiries of passing vessels. Some had not seen "a thirty-ton yacht, schooner-rigged, green below the water-line, and with a broad gold stripe." Others thought they had, and gave such contradictory information that it was of no benefit.

As the sun went down, dark clouds arose to windward, and it became wet and stormy. All through the night the wind moaned, the waves swirled and hissed about the "Lorna's" bow, and fell in masses on her deck, and the rain fell heavily at intervals. "Five pounds a man," Frank had said, "if we overtake her!" He had promised the captain and the policeman whom he had brought with him, liberal gratuities if the chase ended successfully; he himself was too agitated to think of repose. Accordingly, throughout the night all were on the alert, peering into the darkness as the vessel slowly pursued a zigzag course.

"A wild-goose chase, indeed, I fear," Jackson said, sorrowfully, as morning broke, finding him cold, hungry, and exhausted.

"Never fear, sir," replied the skipper. "Twill be hard if we don't meet 'em before they get out of St. George's Channel."

The warm, autumn sun again poured down upon the sea, the wind fell to a fresh breeze, and save in the lofty-crested billows that surrounded them, there remained no trace of last night's storm.

At length they got positive news. A yacht's captain met the object of their pursuit an hour before, steering due south. He could not be mistaken, he knew the "Eulalie" very well, and his crew recog-

nised her, too. The "Lorna" was put at full speed, and bounded forward, throbbing and panting—not climbing the waves, but cleaving them; and over either side of the bow a constant stream of water poured inward and rushed along the deck.

"There she is!" exclaimed the captain, who for some minutes had been silently scanning the horizon, and he handed the glass to Frank. It was some time before the young man could discern anything; then he saw the dark hull, the slender spars, and the white sails like gossamer against the sky.

Soon, figures were seen on board the "Eulalie," then the sails were slightly altered, and as the little craft heeled over, the foam flew in clouds from her bow. Pursuit was evidently suspected, for two men at the stern did not take their eyes from the steamer, which was rapidly overhauling them, and darkening the sea with a dense cloud of smoke.

At length the two vessels were abreast, the "Lorna" about fifty yards to leeward of the other. There was no one on the "Eulalie's" deck, except three or four sailors in blue guernseys and red caps.

"Tell your gents," roared the master of the steamer, "that there's some one here wants 'em."

One of the men thrust his head down the cabin stairs, and in a few moments replied, with a grin: "He is to come on board, if he likes to."

There was a heavy sea running, and the "Eulalie" was going at perhaps ten miles an hour, so that boarding, if not impossible, was at least dangerous. The policeman, who was in plain clothes, and whose identity no one on board the "Lorna" suspected, came forward, and said:

"Now, my lads, I am a police officer, and have a warrant for the arrest of two men for a bank robbery. You are all known, and, if you aid them to escape, will get into trouble."

The jaw of the jocular yachtsman dropped, and he went forward to his fellows. After a short consultation they sprang to the halyards, and the mainsail coming down with a rath and a clatter, the vessel righted, and her speed at once diminished. At the same moment Frank saw at a port-hole Seeley's face, white and terror-stricken.

The "Lorna" was brought nearer, a boat was lowered, and Frank, the officer, and the master went on board the "Eulalie." As they stepped on the deck a pistol-shot

was heard, and they rushed towards the cabin.

Frank was the first to go down, and he saw the two fugitives. Williams lay on a cushion at one side of the compartment, his face covered with blood. Opposite him sat Mark Seeley, an expression of abject terror on his pale face, one hand hanging loosely, and holding a revolver, which dropped from his nerveless fingers as Jackson came down.

He uttered a hoarse cry, and made a feeble effort to seize the weapon; but Frank grasped his arm, and he fell back on the couch, fainting. The young man turned towards Williams, who amid his agony was looking contemptuously at his accomplice.

"We thought of sinking the vessel," he said, in a weak voice, "but found it too slow. Then we agreed to shoot ourselves. I led off, but that cur backed out, though it was all his doing. He took the impression of the other key, and——" His eyes became glazed, he fell back, and in a few moments was dead.

After a search Frank found, in a locker, the two Gladstone bags, which, to within a thousand pounds—the purchase and fitting-out of the yacht probably—contained the whole of the stolen property.

"She's leaking!" exclaimed the skipper of the "Lorna."

A small stream ran from under a closed door, and trickled across the floor. It rapidly grew larger, and suddenly the door was burst open and a volume of water poured into the little cabin, rising to the height of the couches. The master of the steamer sprang up the stairs, Frank followed with the precious bags, and the officer, grasping Seeley's arm, said: "Now, sir, if you please," and pushed him towards the deck.

As the policeman drew a pair of handcuffs from his pouch, the ex-cashier looked wildly round, and, with his hands pressed to his brow, ejaculated:

"Oh, my God! am I going back to Oretown for people to stare at?"

Then he looked over the side, and the officer, fearing an attempt at suicide, hastily seized his arm.

"She's sinking! she's sinking!" came from some of the sailors; and the bow of the "Eulalie" was suddenly raised out of water.

There was a moment of confusion, during which Mark Seeley bounded towards the cabin, and, before he could be stopped, had closed and bolted the door. The

burly officer threw himself against it and made it quiver; but was unable to open it.

Meanwhile the bow rose slowly, higher and higher, and for their own safety, those on board the "Eulalie" were obliged to leave the doomed craft. They had reached the "Lorna" when the end came. The yacht rolled from side to side, and gradually sank lower; then the deck blew up with a loud crash; a mass of foam and spray hid the "Eulalie" for a moment, and when it had cleared away she was gone.

The steamer was headed for the nearest seaport, and, as Frank drove towards the railway station, he saw in the window of a newspaper office a poster, in front of which a crowd was gathered. One or two of the words attracted his attention, and, stopping the cab, he alighted, and read in huge letters:

"Run on an Oretown Bank.—Alleged Extensive Robbery by Cashiers.—Flight of the supposed Delinquents."

When Frank, accompanied by the policeman, dashed up in a cab to the Bank doors, he saw groups of idlers loitering on the opposite side of the way, and two streams of people, one entering and one leaving the building. He went in by the private door, and on getting inside the counter, found the space allotted to the public filled to its utmost extent. The partners sat in a private office, at one end of the large room, from which they could see what passed outside. Both looked weary and anxious.

Mr. Ebenezer sprang to his feet upon seeing the young clerk, and asked, quickly: "Well?"

"It is all right, sir," Jackson replied. "Here it is."

"Thank Heaven!" said the younger man, a tear springing to his eye; and, turning to his brother, he shook his hand.

"We are saved!" he said. "This will keep us going until to-morrow. Go out," he continued, addressing Frank, "and distribute the money. Do it without any fuss—just as you would had it come from next door."

Frank emptied the bags on a large table in view of all present, showing glittering streams of bright gold, and large bundles of crisp notes, neatly folded and securely tied.

"Half an hour more," whispered one of the clerks, "and we should have been cleared out."

The sight of so much money reassured

the timid; the crowd, composed almost altogether of small depositors, gradually melted away; and when at length, after vainly waiting for further claims, Mr. Grubb ordered the doors to be closed, there were still several thousands of pounds in the Bank coffers. The crisis was past. The branches had met all demands; and when the Bank doors were opened next morning, several heavy cases, bearing the seals of the Bank of England, were being unpacked, and Grubb's Bank was saved.

It was some hours after Frank's return that Mr. Ebenezer first referred to the cause of his absence.

"Run home and dress, Jackson, my boy," he said. "I shall call for you, and take you home to dinner. We want to hear your story."

Frank obtained immediate promotion; but his reward did not end there. He had won Mary's affection before his adventure, and that event secured her father's consent to their union. He is now virtually at the head of the Bank, Mr. Ebenezer, the only surviving partner, having unbounded faith in the sagacity of his son-in-law.

SEA LEGENDS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

ONE of the oldest superstitions connected with the sea is undoubtedly that which associated peril with the malefic influence of some individual on shipboard. We find it in the case of the seamen of Joppa, who, when overtaken by a "mighty tempest" on the voyage to Tarshish, said to each other, "Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is cast upon us." The lot, as we know, fell upon Jonah, and after some vain wrestling with the inevitable, the men at last "took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging."

We do not, of course, offer here any comment on, or explanation of, the scriptural narrative, but we invite the reader to compare with it the following remarkable story which that indefatigable delver after old-world wonders, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, has preserved.

Somewhere about midsummer of the year 1480, a ship, sailing out of the Forth for a port in Holland, was assailed by a furious tempest, which increased to such a

remarkable degree for such a mild season of the year, that the sailors were overcome with fear, and gave themselves up for lost. At length an old woman, who was a passenger by the vessel, came on deck and entreated them to throw her overboard as the only means of preserving their own lives, saying that she had long been haunted by an "Incubus" in the shape of a man from whose grasp she could not free herself. Fortunately for all parties there was another passenger on board—a priest—who was called to the rescue. After a long admonition, and many sighs and prayers, "there issued forth of the pumps of the ship," says Hollinshed, "a foul and evil-favoured blacke cloud, with a mightie terrible noise, flame, smoke, and stinke, which presentlie fell into the sea, and suddenlie, thereupon, the tempest ceased, and the ship passing in great quiet the residue of her journee, arrived in safetie at the place whither she was bound."

There is doubtless some association between this class of superstition and the old Talmudic legend, according to which the devils were specially angered when, at the creation, man received dominion over the things of the sea. This was a realm of unrest and tempest, which the devils claimed as belonging to themselves. But, says the legend, although denied control of the life that is in the sea, the devils were permitted a large degree of power over its waters, while over the winds their rule was supreme.

There is scarcely a current legend or superstition which cannot be traced to very remote sources. Thus, in the Chaldeo-Babylonian cosmogony, there was a Triad, which ruled the three zones of the universe: the heaven, by Anu; the surface of the earth and the atmosphere, by Bel; and the under-world, by Nonah. Now Nonah is held to be both the same as the Assyrian Hea, or Saviour, and as the Noah of the Bible. So when Tiamat, the dragon, or the leviathan, opens "the fountains of the great deep," and Anu, "the windows of heaven," it is Hea, or Noah, who saves the life of man.

This legend is supposed, by M. François Lenormant, to explain an allusion in one of the most ancient Accadian manuscripts in the British Museum, to "the serpent of seven heads, that beats the sea." This hydra was the type of the destructive water-demon, who figures in the legends of all countries.

In the same way, to the Syrian fish-

deities, Dagon and Artergatis, must we look for the origin of our Undines and fish-maidens, and mer-maidens.

The "Nixy" of Germany has, by some, been supposed traceable to "Old Nick"; but this is not probable, since Saint Nicholas has been the patron-saint of sailors for many centuries. It was during the time of the Crusades that a vessel on the way to the Holy Land was in great peril, and Saint Nicholas assuaged a tempest by his prayers. Since then he has been supposed to be the protector of mariners, even as Neptune was in ancient times, and in most Roman Catholic countries you will find, in seaport towns, churches dedicated to Saint Nicholas, to which sailors resort to return thanks for preservation at sea and to make votive offerings.

The German Nixy was, no doubt, a later form of the old Norse water-god, Nikke. You meet with him again, in another form, in Neckan, the soulless.

The "Nixa," along the Baltic coast, was once, however, much feared by the fishermen. It was the same spirit which appears as the Kelpie in Scotland—a water-demon which caused sudden floods to carry away the unwary, and then devoured them.

There was a river-goddess in Germany, whose temple stood at Magdeburg, of whom a legend exists that she also once visited earth and went to market in a Christian costume, where she was detected by a continual dripping of water from the corner of her apron. Generally speaking, however, the Nixies may be described as the descendants of the Naiads of ancient times, and as somewhat resembling the Russian Rusalkas, of which the peasantry live in much dread.

A Russian peasant, it is said, is so afraid of the water-spirits that he will not bathe without a cross round his neck, nor ford a stream on horseback without signing a cross on the water with a scythe or knife. In some parts, these water-spirits are supposed to be the transformed souls of Pharaoh and his host, when they were drowned, and the number is always being increased by the souls of those who drown themselves.

It is said that in Bohemia fishermen have been known to refuse aid to drowning persons lest "Vodyany" would be offended and prevent the fish from entering the nets.

This "Vodyany," however, seems rather a variant of the old Hydra, who reappears

in the diabolical names so frequently given to boiling springs and dangerous torrents. "The Devil's Tea-kettles" and "Devil's Punch-bowls" of England and America have the same association as the weird legends connected with the Strudel and Wirbel whirlpools of the Danube, and the rapids of the Rhine, and other rivers. Curiously enough we find the same idea in "The Arabian Nights," when "The sea became troubled before them, and there arose from it a black pillar ascending towards the sky, and approaching the meadow, and behold it was a Jinn of gigantic stature."

This demon was a waterspout, and waterspouts in China are attributed to the battles of dragons. "The Chinese," says Mr. Moncure Conway, "have canonised of recent times a special protectress against the storm-demons of the coast, in obedience to the wishes of the sailors."

The swan-maidens, who figure in so many legends, are mere varieties of the mer-maiden, and, according to the Icelandic superstition, they and all fairies were children of Eve, whom she hid away on one occasion when the Lord came to visit her, because they were not washed and presentable! They were condemned to be invisible for ever.

A Scotch story, quoted by Mr. Conway, rather bears against this theory. One day, it seems, as a fisherman sat reading his Bible, a beautiful nymph, lightly clad in green, came to him out of the sea, and asked if the book contained any promise of mercy for her. He replied that it contains an offer of salvation to "all the children of Adam," whereupon she fled away with a loud shriek, and disappeared in the sea. But the beautiful stories of water-nymphs, of Undines and Loreleis, and mer-women, are too numerous to be even mentioned, and too beautiful, in many cases, to make one care to analyse.

One of the most circumstantial descriptions of these amphibious mysteries, it may be recalled, was quoted in this Journal, in a paper about "A New North-West Passage." There is, however, a tradition in Holland that when, in 1440, the dikes were broken down by a violent tempest, the sea overflowed the meadows. Some women of the town of Edam, going one day in a boat to milk their cows, discovered a mermaid in shallow water floundering about with her tail in the mud. They took her into a boat, brought her to Edam, dressed her in women's clothes, and

taught her to spin, and to eat as they did. They even taught her something of religion, or, at any rate, to bow reverently when she passed a crucifix; but they could not teach her to speak. What was the ultimate fate of this remarkable creature we do not know.

The reader who desires to know more about these mythical inhabitants of the sea, will find many interesting notes about them in Mr. Baring-Gould's "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages."

Everybody, of course, is familiar with the old sea-legend of the Flying Dutchman—whether in stories of Phantom Ships, or in the Opera of Wagner. The spirit of Vanderdecken, which is still supposed to roam the waters, is merely the modern version of our old friend, Nikke, the Norwegian water-demon. This is a deathless legend, and used to be as devotedly believed in as the existence of Mother Carey, sitting away up in the north, despatching her "chickens" in all directions to work destruction for poor Jack. But Mother Carey really turns out to be a most estimable being, if Charles Kingsley's account of her in his story of "Water-Babies" be correct.

"Sailors," says Brand, in his "Popular Antiquities," "usually the boldest Men alive, are yet frequently the very abject slaves of superstitious Fear. They have various puerile Apprehensions concerning Whistling on Shipboard, carrying a Corpse, etc., all which are Vestiges of the old Woman in human Nature, and can only be erased by the united Efforts of Philosophy and Religion."

It is to be regretted, however, that the good Brand did not devote as much attention to the Superstitions of Sailors as he did to those of some other folks. In effect, he has left us little more than the above.

As is the case with almost all folk-lore, little variety is to be found in the sea superstitions of different nations. The ideas of the supernatural on shipboard are pretty much the same, whether the flag flown be the Union Jack, the German Eagle, the French Tricolor, the Yankee Stars and Stripes, or even the Chinese Dragon. These superstitions are numerous, and are tenaciously clung to, but yet it would not be fair to say that seamen are, as a class, more superstitious than landmen of their own rank. The great mystery of the sea; the uncertainty of life upon its bosom; the isolation and frequent loneliness; the wonder of the storms, and calms, and lights

—everything connected with a sailor's occupation is calculated to impress him with the significance of signs and omens.

That mariners do not like to have a corpse on board is not remarkable, for the majority of people ashore get rather "creepy" if they have to sleep in a house where lies a dead body. Moreover, the old idea of bad luck which led to the throwing overboard of Jonah, is in this case transferred from the living to the dead. The objection to whistling is also explainable by the old practice of "whistling for a wind," for an injudicious whistler might easily bring down a blow from the wrong quarter.

There are some animals and birds which have a peculiar significance at sea. The cat, for instance, is generally disliked, and many sailors will not have one on board at any price, and, if there is one which becomes unusually frisky, they will say the cat has got a gale of wind in her tail. On one part of the Yorkshire coast, it is said, sailors' wives were in the habit of keeping black cats to ensure the safety of their husbands at sea, until black cats became so scarce and dear that few could afford to buy one. Although Jack does not like a cat in the ship, he will not throw one overboard, for that would bring on a storm.

Miss Smith, in her book about "Music of the Waters," states that a dead hare on a ship is considered a sign of an approaching hurricane, and Cornish fishermen declare that a white hare seen about the quays at night indicates that there will be rough weather. Miss Smith also gives a number of other superstitions, some of which we will mention as we go along.

The pig is an object of aversion to Japanese seamen, and also to Filey fishermen, who will not go to sea if they meet one in the early morning. But, indeed, the pig seems to be generally disliked by all seafarers, except in the form of salt pork and bacon.

Rats, however, are not objected to; indeed, it would be useless to object, for they overrun all ships. And rats are supposed to only leave a vessel when it is going to sink. A Welsh skipper, however, once cleared his ship of them without the risk of a watery grave, by drawing her alongside a cheese-laden ship in harbour. He quietly lay alongside, and, having left the hatches open all night, drew off with a chuckle in the morning, leaving a liberal legacy to his neighbour.

The Stormy Petrel is supposed to herald

bad weather, and the Great Auk to tell that land is very near. This is true enough as regards the Auk, which never ventures beyond soundings; but one doubts the truth of the popular belief that when the sea-gulls hover near the shore, a storm is at hand. The Scotch rhyme runs:

Sea-gull, sea-gull, sit on the sand,
It's never good weather when you're on the land.

Mr. Thistleton Dyer quotes from Sinclair's "Statistical Account of Scotland" in confirmation of this belief, that in the county of Forfar, "when they appear in the fields, a storm from the south-east generally follows; and when the storm begins to abate, they fly back to the shore." This does not accord with our experience of the west coast of Scotland, where the sea-gulls frequent the shores of lochs and hillsides far inland all the summer. Naturally there are storms sometimes after their appearance, but just as often fine weather continues. As well say that the flocks of these beautiful birds that follow in the wake of a tourist steamer to pick up unconsidered trifles presage sea-sickness to the passengers.

It is said that in Cornwall sailors will not walk at night along portions of the shore where there have been many wrecks, as they believe that the souls of the drowned haunt such localities, and that the "calling of the dead" has been frequently heard. Some even say that they have heard the voices of dead sailors hailing their own names. One can readily excuse a timorousness in Jack in such circumstances. Many persons besides sailors shrink from localities which have been the scenes of murder or sudden death.

Friday is the sailor's pet aversion, as an unlucky day on which to sail or begin work. But this is not surprising, when we remember that Friday has everywhere more superstition and folk-lore attached to it than any other day in the week, originating, perhaps, as Mr. Thistleton Dyer suggests, from the fact that it was the day on which Christ was crucified. Lord Byron had the superstitious aversion to Friday; and even among the Brahmins no business must be commenced on this day. In Lancashire a man will not "go a-courting on Friday; and Brand says: "A respectable merchant of the city of London informed me that no person will begin any business, that is, open his shop for the first time, on a Friday." The "respectable merchant" might be hard to find now-

adays, but still one does not need to go to sailors to find a prejudice against Friday.

Other things which are accounted unlucky by superstitious seamen are: to sneeze on the left side at the moment of embarking; to count the men on board; to ask fishermen, before they start, where they are bound for; to point with the finger to a ship when at sea; to lose a mop or water-bucket; to cut the hair or nails at sea, except during a storm.

With regard to this last, Miss Smith whimsically suggests that a calm voyage must send back a crew "whose fingers would be formidable weapons to encounter, and whose looks would be suggestive of Rip van Winkle or Robinson Crusoe."

These are a few of the sea superstitions as preserved in rhyme:

The evening grey and the morning red,
Put on your hat or you'll wet your head.

(Meaning that it will rain.)

When the wind shifts against the sun,
Trust it not, for it will run.

(That is, soon change again.)

When the sun sets in the clear,
An easterly wind you need not fear.
The evening red and morning grey,
Are sure signs of a fine day.

(A distich not peculiar to followers of the sea.)

But the evening grey and morning red,
Makes the sailor shake his head.

This refers to the barometer:

First rise, after low,
Indicates a stronger blow.

And this:

Long foretold, long last;
Short notice, soon past.

These, however, are hardly superstitions, but maxims based on experience. Of the same character are the following:

In squalls
When the rain's before the wind
Halyards, sheets, and braces mind.

Also,

When the wind's before the rain
Soon you may make sail again.

And

When the glass falls low,
Prepare for a blow;
When it rises high,
Let all your kites fly,

A rainbow in the morning,
Sailors take warning;
A rainbow at night,
Is the sailor's delight.

The Manx fishermen have many curious sayings about herrings. Thus the common expression, "As dead as a herring," is due to them. They say also, "Every herring must hang by its own gills," and their favourite toast is, "Life to man and

death to fish." They count one hundred and twenty-four fish to the hundred, thus: they first sort out lots of one hundred and twenty, then add three to each lot, which is called "warp," and then a single herring, which is called "tally." Before shooting the nets at sea every man goes down on his knees at a sign from the skipper of the boat, and, with his head uncovered, prays for a blessing on the fishing.

The sound of the death-bell is often supposed to be heard at sea before a wreck, and this idea may be either associated with the bell-buoy which marks many sunken, dangerous rocks, or with the religious ceremonies of the old days.

At Malta it is usual to ring the church bells for an hour during a storm "that the wind may cease and the sea be calmed," and the same custom prevails, we are told, both in Sicily and Sardinia.

Miss Smith mentions a Cornish legend of the bells of Bottreux Church, which were sent by ship, which was lost in sight of the town, owing to the blasphemy of the Captain. "The bells are supposed to be in the bay, and announce by strange sounds the approach of a storm."

There is a suggestion of Sir Ralph the Rover in this legend; but, indeed, the superstitions of those connected with the sea are so interwoven, that it is not easy to disentangle them. No doubt our mariners derived many of them from the old Spanish navigators, who once swayed the Main, for the Spaniards are one of the most superstitious nations in the world.

"FOR SWEET CHARITY."

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

By B. DEMPSTER.

Author of "*Through Gates of Gold*," "*My Lady's Chamber*," "*The Mystery of Deadman's Flat*," etc. etc.

CHAPTER III.

THREE days after the strange meeting in the Gardens, Daisy Carr received a letter from her lawyer at Broadford, containing a startling piece of news. The missing will, which had cost her grandfather his inheritance, had been found in a secret cupboard of the old house in which he had lived and died. By it, Daisy Carr, as his direct descendant, could claim the whole of the property which, by the loss of this will, had passed from them. The lawyer gave her very little information of its finding. He really knew nothing. A workman—from the

description given by his servant — had left a packet at his house late the previous evening, saying that it was very important, and was to be delivered into his hands immediately. When he had opened it, he found the will. The workman had disappeared; nor had anything since been seen of him. The lawyer had gone straight to the house where Jane, the woman in charge, had told him that she had received orders from Miss Carr to allow this same workman to do as he wished in the house. The woman said he had been shut up in one of the rooms for a long time. That he had come out, finally, looking very pleased, carrying a packet in his hand. He had gone from the house into Broadford. With the will had been a little note saying that it had been found in a secret drawer in the room, and that any further information the lawyer would be able to get from Miss Carr herself.

Miss Carr was astounded. If she claimed this property, she became a very rich woman. She thought how her grandfather's life had been wasted and embittered in vain regrets for it, when all the time, close at his hand, was the will that gave it to him. And now he was dead, and it had been found at last. For a moment, this great fortune seemed very worthless. Then her thoughts went to the mysterious workman who had done this service for her. All day long she thought over this strange thing that had happened to her. She said nothing to anybody. There was no one, really, to speak to. Mrs. Cecil was in a most unusually bad temper. Besides, she was not one to whom Daisy would have gone with any news, either good or bad, and she had no friends in London. She thought over it, trying to realise it, and the wonderful difference it would make in her position. But, somehow, she felt a curious lack of interest in it; or, rather, her thoughts always found themselves wandering to the man who had thus changed her whole life for her. Why had he taken this trouble? Had he come over to England just to do it? Surely, he was very grateful. And it was such a little thing she had once done for him! These thoughts were most unprofitable. She found herself growing more restless and excited with a strange trouble and pain as the day went on. About half-past four—impelled by what strange impulse she never knew—she slipped out of the house and went towards the Gardens.

She made her way to the Serpentine. It was dark; but not foggy as the previous evening when she had come. As she neared the Long Water, she hardly knew what she expected to see; but when she reached the edge of the basin, at the spot where she had stood before, she saw what, she knew now, she had expected to see all along—a tall figure in the rough working-clothes, which accentuated rather than disguised the aristocratic grace of its bearing. She was suddenly afraid, and would have turned back; but it was too late. He came quickly forward through the clear dusk.

"You have come! I felt I was worse than a fool to hope it! But——"

"Of course, I should wish to see you again!" she said, recovering herself a little, as she forgot womanly shyness and pride in the remembrance of what he had done for her. "All day long, I have been expecting a note from you. Then, as it did not come, I thought I would just see if you were here. How can I thank——"

"By saying nothing of it," with a smile. "But I must tell you a little. If I had not seen you to-night—I should have written."

"You would not have tried to see me again!" she exclaimed, quite unconscious of the reproach in her voice.

He flushed darkly, his eyes growing bitter.

"No—I—Miss Carr, men gamble like fools with their lives, and—well, I played away mine, once—and I am not fit to speak to such as you. But," with a note of impatient self-scorn, "I did not come here to talk of myself. I want to tell you how I have been able to do you this trifling service. The man I spoke to you about, was the son of your great-uncle's servant. Your great-uncle, Thomas Carr, who, by the loss of that will, inherited the property that should have been your grandfather's. This servant, James Weston, was devoted to your great-uncle. He had some grudge against your grandfather, and hated him as much as he loved his master. He knew of the two wills that had been made. One benefited your grandfather, the other his brother. On the night of the death of their father, which was very sudden, he managed to gain access to the room where these wills were kept, and taking possession of one, hid it away in that drawer. He was afraid to destroy it. It turned out as he had hoped. The only will found gave the property to your great-

uncle, who inherited it. But there was always a suspicion of foul play, which, I daresay you heard, told against your great-uncle all his life. You will see, however, that he was not the sinner; for his servant, James Weston, never breathed to him a word of what he had done. Still, he knew"—as Daisy uttered an exclamation—"that by the father's constantly expressed intention, he meant to leave the property to your grandfather. However, any way, if he suspected unfair play, he said nothing, and took advantage of it. James Weston kept the secret; but betrayed himself, on his death-bed, to his son. This son—who had come over from America to see his father before he died—troubled very little about it. But when he came to die, it seemed to worry him, as it had haunted his father. He told me that his father had evidently suffered considerable remorse for his share in the matter, and was tormented with the doubt whether he ought not to put the wrong straight before dying. But he did not. His son felt, now, that he might help atone for his father's sin. I was the only one by him. He told me all about it, making me promise that I would shield his father's name as well as I could. I do not think I should have undertaken the charge—I was callous enough at the time, and old wrongs, affecting other people, did not trouble me. But, suddenly, I found out from what he said, that it affected you! The one who had helped me at my direst necessity. It was a strange coincidence. It changed all. I promised him, and, directly he was dead, came."

"And you came all this way for me!"

"It was nothing! Do you remember what you did for me?"

"Nothing! I gave you my supper!" with a laugh that had an odd little note in it. "You were fainting for food, and I didn't want it."

"Was it your own supper? I have often wondered——" Then he checked himself abruptly and went on again in a hard tone, "I hope you will have no difficulty about your inheritance. I must leave England to-morrow."

There was a slight pause.

"There will not be any difficulty," she said, in a spiritless tone. "For I shall not take advantage of the will."

"Not take advantage of it!"

"No! What do you take me for?" with a note of anger in her voice. "Those people have had it all these years. They

have learned to think it their right. I shall not take it from them. After all, I have never been rich. I do not care to be rich. I would rather work for my living!"

What folly possessed her! She did not know. She felt that it was impossible to deprive these relations, now, of a property which, even if they had inherited it unjustly, had still come to them in all innocence, as far as they were concerned. But she was scarcely thinking of them now.

His face changed strangely. He turned it from her. And as he looked into the darkness, two men stepped out of it, up to his side.

One was a policeman, the other a detective in plain clothes.

The latter laid his hand on his arm.

"I have a warrant for your arrest for forgery, Mr. William Cecil," he said, quietly.

CHAPTER IV.

How the next fortnight went by, Daisy never knew. She was rich. The relation who at the time held the property was an old lady. The lawyer, knowing something of Daisy's nature, had written straight to her and acquainted her with the facts of the case. The old lady, who was very delicate, was much disturbed at the news. She insisted upon seeing Daisy, and repairing the wrong unintentionally done her. She destroyed the will she had made, leaving the property elsewhere, and made Daisy her heiress; only begging her to let her live with her the short time she had left on earth. Daisy, who had never known what it was to have a woman relation in the world, grew very fond of the old cousin. Indeed, her kindly protection made the miserable fortnight that followed more endurable to her. She scarcely thought of her own new life. That the man she had helped so long ago, who had helped her so well in return, should be Lord Goldtree's eldest son was strange enough. But to find him a felon; to see him waiting to take his trial as a forger was intolerable. She had left the Cecils the next morning after the arrest. She could not have stayed another day in their house. She felt almost certain that they, more than the father, had had the most to do in arresting him. Surely the father would have been only too glad to let him leave England unmolested. When Daisy thought that it was through her that Will Cecil had come to England, her

position became still more unendurable. She remembered his reckless, extravagant life—the sins she had abhorred in him—she thought of the cheque, by which, after unlimited favours and benefits lavished on him, he had tried to rob his father, and yet, hating, despising the sins as she did, she could not forget the sinner. She felt shamed herself by thinking of him. But it was no good. The scene that was always present with her was the country lane, with the fainting, weary man, flying even then from justice, craving her aid. He was in greater trouble now, and she was doing nothing for him.

Would nothing stay this horrible prosecution? It was most unnatural. Surely his father and brothers must see that they were bringing dishonour on themselves.

Lord Goldtree was a cruel, vindictive man; but he must have some sense of mercy—some sense of the fitness of things. If only some one could see him—plead with him. She herself was quite outside the family. Since her departure, she heard and saw nothing of them. Daisy did not dare go to the house to make enquiries. What would they think of her asking about Mr. William Cecil? She could not question the servants about the family troubles. She did try to see Mrs. Charles one day, hoping to get some news. But Mrs. Charles had a headache, and sent down word to say that she could not see Miss Carr that morning. All that Daisy could find out was from a notice in the paper of the approaching trial. It, of course, made a great stir in the fashionable world; but she was living so completely out of it, nursing her new-found relation in the country, that she heard nothing of it. But one day, when she had gone up to London on business, about a week before the trial came off, she met Mrs. Charles Cecil's maid. The latter had always been very civil to Daisy. She stopped now; and after expressing her pleasure at meeting her, and her dismay at seeing her looking so thin and pale, she discoursed volubly about the family affairs. Daisy let her speak. She felt sick at heart for want of news. She heard that old Lord Goldtree was more morose and savage than ever. That Mr. Moreton—his man—was quite worn out. That all the household, keenly excited by the approaching trial, was certain that the old man was suffering dreadfully about it, though he would not give in. That Mr. and Mrs. Charles were also looking worried

and harassed. That Mrs. Charles was nearly out of her mind with other worries, too. The maid said that both the dress-maker and jeweller had been making themselves very unpleasant lately. That she supposed it was all this worry of her own that made Mrs. Charles so indifferent about Mr. William's position.

"She has any amount of influence with Lord Goldtree," said the maid, indignantly. "And we're all sure, if she'd plead for him, the old gentleman would give up this wicked trial."

Daisy let her talk on. A sudden thought had come to her. With this thought came a conviction. It was horrible, but it was true. The Charles Cecils, for their own ends, wanted to get the elder brother out of the way. What was their reason? The maid's chatter about their debts told her. If she could make terms with them! If she could get Mrs. Charles to plead to the old man for the prisoner! No one would ever know her share in it. There would be no need. When Will Cecil was once free, he would be dead to her. Not even for the sake of what he had done for her, could they ever meet again as friends. She could never call a man a friend who had been guilty of such a base crime as that. To her credit at the bank there lay a sum of twenty thousand pounds; Miss Spencer, her cousin, had placed it there two days before; instead of it being invested in her name, as was intended, she would draw it out.

That same afternoon, she called on Mrs. Charles. She was admitted this time. The interview between the two women lasted some time. When it was over, Mrs. Charles sat crying, partly with relief, partly with anger and baffled curiosity. What had possessed her late companion to take this most extraordinary step? What was Will to her that she would be willing to part with twenty thousand pounds to get him off his trial? Mrs. Charles had not yielded easily; she had been haughty and impertinent at first. But Miss Carr was not to be silenced. She spoke such words of truth, and placed Mrs. Charles's conduct and position in such an unpleasant light, that the little lady at last burst into tears, and consented, in exchange for the twenty thousand pounds, to plead with her father-in-law to let Will go free. If she succeeded, the cheque was to be handed over to her the next day.

She did succeed. Lord Goldtree refused to prosecute, and Will Cecil found him-

self a free man once more. At what cost he did not know for years after. He left England again. It was well for him that a little note reached him before he sailed. The experience of the last few weeks had done him no good. It had embittered him and made him more reckless than ever. Full of hate and anger against everybody, he would have returned to America and there gone back to the old courses which had been his ruin before he had had to work for his daily bread. But that little note saved him: it was so gentle, so pitiful, so earnest in its entreaty that he would conquer and not be conquered, that, as he read it, he vowed to himself that he would do his utmost to deserve her faith and trust.

Two long weary years went by. What they were to him no one ever knew. He never cared to speak of them afterwards, even to his nearest and dearest. The shame and degradation of that arrest seemed to cling to him through them; and with it all was a great home-sickness that he had never felt before. Something—a feeling which he would never allow himself to analyse—was always drawing him towards England.

But one day—at one of his darkest moments, when life seemed to have become unendurable for its loneliness and unsatisfied aching and weary shadow of dishonour—news came to him. At first he could scarcely realise it. His brother Charles had been thrown in the hunting-field and mortally hurt. On his death-bed he made a confession. It was he who had forged the cheque. His brother, at the time, had such a bad name that it was easy to allow him to be suspected. No one, for an instant, had ever doubted Will's guilt. If he himself had ever had any suspicions, he kept them to himself. His life was so dark that one more shadow cast on it had seemed almost endurable, rather than that his father should have to bear one more pang in the guilt of his younger son. Charles was dead.

He had died bitterly repentant, and their father sent now for his elder son, entreating him to come back at once.

Will returned. He visited his father, who, in his gladness at receiving back his lost son, would have opposed no wish of his. But Will had made up his mind. In some strange way, a woman, of whom he knew so little, as the world calls know-

ing, had become the guardian angel of his soul. Without her, it seemed as if life would be impossible. So long as that dark shadow covered him, he would not ask her. Now that he was cleared, he would go to her. He found out that she was living at the old house at Broadford. Her relation had died, but she did not care to live at the grand place she had inherited. Some feeling, of which she kept the secret locked up in her heart, took her back to the old house. And every evening—summer or winter, in sunshine or rain—she would go down to the fence, and look up the lane, thinking of the man who had once come by that way.

One evening, as she stood leaning against it, feeling grey, and cold, and old, her face turned towards the setting sun, she heard the sound of a footstep. It was winter time. In two days it would be Christmas. The footsteps struck sharp and clear on the frosty road. She turned to look, and suddenly it seemed as if the crimson flush of the setting sun had tinted her cheeks, giving them back their youth and roundness. She stood still, looking at him. He came on, his face pale, but his eyes smiling, though it was a very grave smile. He reached the fence and stood just on the other side, opposite to her, as he had done long ago, when she was still but a child.

"My heart and soul are needing you," he said. "Will you satisfy me, to-night, as you did once, long ago, 'for sweet charity's sake'?"

She looked at him, her eyes filling slowly with tears, her lips trembling.

"I was young, then; I am growing old, now, and faded."

"You are beautiful to me, as you were that summer evening, long ago, when I thought you the loveliest vision man's eyes could rest on. Be my wife. I can ask you to-day. You have heard?"

"Yes—his wife told me. She is very unhappy."

"She will recover," he said, with a half-bitter laugh. Then he forgot the selfish, heartless woman who had been his brother's partner in the wrong done him. "But I want your answer."

She laid her hands in his. And with the glorious crimson light falling about them, they spoke of the love which was to strengthen and help them through all the coming life.

IS STAMMERING CURABLE?

IS STAMMERING CURABLE?

By B. BEASLEY.

It does not often occur that what has been a man's misfortune during the greater part of his life should eventually result in benefits not only to himself but also to his fellow-creatures. The life of Mr. Beasley, the eminent authority on defects in speech, more particularly relating to stammering, is an exception to this rule. "Physician, cure thyself," would be a fitting title to a little book written by him on "Stammering: its Treatment," wherein the author alludes to the fact of having cured himself of that malady after suffering for more than thirty years. This work may be read with great interest by all who seek knowledge of the subject, and will no doubt find its way and be a valuable addition to every library, where it will prove immeasurably useful as a book of reference.

As a child, Mr. Beasley was remarkable for his fluency of speech, but an attack of low fever left an impediment which, although only slight at first, gradually developed until, as a youth, he had become a confirmed stammerer of the most inveterate type, his scholastic training having been a painful and laborious task alike to his instructors and himself. In spite of every effort on the part of his parents, who spared no expense in procuring the best advice and treatment which could be obtained, his case was pronounced hopeless and incurable, and in this pitiable condition he commenced life in the counting-house of his father—an ironmaster of South Staffordshire; but the brilliant commercial prospects thus held out to him were never realised, but faded one by one before his inability to make himself intelligible. The spirit of determination and perseverance so heavily discounted in his industrial career enabled him to compete successfully with the first amateur sportsmen and athletes in trials of skill which required no talking, and in all manly sports he was considered one of the best men of his day. He will be remembered by old Volunteers as one of the earliest promoters of the movement, as one of the champion rifle shots in Lord Bury's first English eight who competed successfully against Captain Ross's Scotch team for the Elcho Challenge Shield at Wimbledon in the year 1862, and the victor in many other competitions and athletic sports too numerous to be recorded here. It will not be supposed that a man of so

much ability and force of character would leave anything untried to rid himself of so great a curse as his impediment had long been to him.

Accident revealed to him what possibly he might never have noticed but that he had been for many years seeking a cure; but accident it certainly was which pointed out to him the first grand principle that must be inculcated before a stammerer can find relief; but it was only by dint of many years of labour, study, and research that he discovered and perfected the system of treatment for the cure of stammering which has gained him the distinction of being the greatest living authority on the subject. Having completed his own cure, the student became the monitor, at first only as a philanthropist; but so remarkable was the success attained in every individual case that he was led to adopt the cure of stammering as a profession.

Mr. Beasley does not claim to be a worker of miracles, or to possess more power than any other minute observer could obtain; he only claims to be the sole founder of a system by which he has cured himself and others of a most distressful affliction. He says:—"It is in a measure to the devotion to his profession and the fact of having been himself a stammerer for so many years, that his success with others is to be attributed"; but we suspect that not a little of this success is due to his genial disposition, for, although past fifty, he still joins in the out-door amusements of his pupils, thereby creating that confidence between instructor and instructed which is so essential in the treatment of this disorder.

In addition to his physical qualifications, he possesses other accomplishments not less useful in their nature, and, as a reader, is far from being a mean exponent of Shakespeare or Dickens. Few men could be found, supposing they had his knowledge, so well qualified for the work he is doing. And thus the early misfortunes of the subject of this sketch have proved a boon to the community at large, and led to the establishment of two institutions for the reception of pupils for treatment and instruction; one at Green Bank College, Hall Green, near Birmingham, and one at Baron's Court House, West Kensington, London, where young and old of both sexes who had thought their impediments were absolutely incurable, have had the power of perfect speech

IS STAMMERING CURABLE?

restored to them; and many whose lives might otherwise have been aimless and without ambition, have been enabled to enter the Church, the Army, the Navy, and medical professions.

It would be difficult to find a more striking example of the efficacy of Mr. Beasley's system than the founder himself, as will be well remembered by those who have had the privilege of hearing him lecture, or have read the flattering criticisms contained from time to time in the columns of our contemporaries.—*Illustrated London News*, Nov, 20th, 1886.

There are few habits which are so vexatious and trying to speaker and listener alike as stammering; yet this painful infirmity is by no means scarce, even among grown-up people. By a judicious course of training, however, under competent guidance, it is almost always possible for a complete cure to be effected, especially if the stammerer be young. This was amply and satisfactorily proved recently on the occasion of the "Speech Day" given by the pupils or patients of Mr. Benjamin Beasley, at his establishment, Hall Green, near Birmingham. Mr. Beasley, whose little work on the subject of stammering is well known, undertakes to cure the young people who are placed under his care, in a very short space of time, by the identical method by which he eradicated the fault in himself some years ago. The result as witnessed on this occasion was most satisfactory. It would have been difficult to detect the slightest hesitation or nervousness on the part of any of the pupils at Hall Green; indeed, their elocution was far above the average. Mr. Beasley may be heartily congratulated on the success which has attended his efforts.—*Society*, July 14th, 1883.

The annual "speech day" at the residence of Mr. B. Beasley, Green Bank House, Hall Green, Worcestershire, which took place on Thursday, was in every sense a success. To the parents and friends of Mr. Beasley's pupils, and still more to the pupils themselves, it must have been highly gratifying. When it is taken into consideration that the majority of the speakers had entered the establishment only a short time ago as painful and inveterate stammerers, it is marvellously surprising that such results in so short a time could be obtained. Stammerers who had been afflicted for

years were heard to speak with a fluency and an articulation quite up to, if not above, the average of most people who have no impediment. The pupils were from all classes—the church, the army, the navy, the middle class, and the working man; and all testified alike to the sound and perfectly natural system adopted by Mr. Beasley, who was himself for many years terribly afflicted with this most distressing drawback to success in life.—*Bristol Observer*, August 6th, 1884.

Amongst the annual "speech days" which at this time of the year take place at the various scholastic establishments of the district none perhaps present more interesting features than that which occurred last evening at Green Bank House, Hall Green, where Mr. B. Beasley has committed to his charge many pupils who labour under the misfortune of stammering. Rather strange it would appear to most people the idea of holding a "speech day" amongst those who are generally supposed to be the least able to speak with fluency, but to the visitor who last evening had the opportunity of listening to the addresses—and in some cases the eloquent addresses—of those who a short time ago could hardly make themselves understood even to their most intimate friends, the only feeling would be that of surprise at the marvellous change which had been effected. After devoting the greater portion of his life to the study of defective articulation, Mr. Beasley has succeeded in laying down a method by which the most hopeless cases are successfully treated, as was evidenced in an unmistakable way by the clear, deliberate, and distinct utterances of the speakers last night. Indeed, one would have thought, had he not known otherwise, that Green Bank House, instead of being an institution for the cure of stammerers, was an academy for the study of elocution, so well were the speeches delivered, so admirably were the different subjects treated, and so perfect and complete were the pronunciation and inflexion of every word. The visitors arrived shortly after noon, and the greater part of the time until evening was devoted to lawn tennis and strolling through the extensive grounds. In the evening the party assembled in the drawing room, where several speeches were made, and shortly afterwards the proceedings concluded.—*Midland Counties Herald*, August 7th, 1884.

IS STAMMERING CURABLE?

TESTIMONIALS OF CASES TREATED.

The following will speak of the success of Mr. Beasley's system :—

THE REV. CANON HUTCHINGS, Alderbury Vicarage, Salisbury.
THE REV. CANON CAPEL, Abergavenny.
THE REV. ALFRED PEACHE, The Firs, Hampstead, London.
THE REV. R. BULLOCK, The Chaplain's House, Wakefield.
THE REV. RICHARD JONES, Vicar, Hall Green, near Birmingham.
THE REV. W. W. POLEY, Brandon House, Brandon, Suffolk.
THE REV. RICHARD FORT, Coopersale Vicarage, Epping.
LORD BURTON, 101 Eaton Square, London.
LADY BURTON, 101 Eaton Square, London.
SIR JOHN DON WAUCHOPE, Bart, Edmonstone House, Liberton, Midlothian.
LADY JOHN DON WAUCHOPE, Edmonstone House, Liberton, Midlothian.
COLONEL BUIST, 26 Chalmers Street, Edinburgh.
COLONEL MALLESON, 27 West Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London.
LIEUT.-COLONEL WILLIAMS, Sutton Coldfield, near Birmingham.
CAPTAIN GREENWOOD, 10th Royal Hussars.
SURGEON-GENERAL TOWNSEND.
DR. DRUMMOND, Gosta Green, Birmingham.
DR. FRER, Surgeon to the Orthopaedic Hospital, Birmingham.
JOHN WALFORD, Esq., Solicitor, Newhall Street, Birmingham.
JOSEPH ROYLE SHORE, Esq., Solicitor, Newhall Street, Birmingham.
WILLIAM AVERY, Esq., Headless Cross, Redditch.
G. P. BRAUND, Esq., Stancliffe, Barrow-on-Soar.
H. W. BURGESS, Esq., Reigate, Surrey.
DAVID CARGILL, Esq., Cowgate, Dundee.
J. M. CHUTE, Esq., Princes Theatre, Bristol.
J. A. CRAVEN, Esq., Whilton Lodge, Daventry.
EDWIN GRICE, Esq., The Fields, Newport, Monmouthshire.
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PRICE TWOPENCE.

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

BOOK I.

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

TOLD BY CANDACE BIRT.

CHAPTER I. IN A CUL-DE-SAC.

I AM perfectly willing to admit that our house is in a "no-thoroughfare," and might have a livelier look-out; on the other hand, we have not half so much traffic as if we were open at both ends, instead of only at one; and, on a quiet summer's afternoon, the rattle of the cans in the premises of the "Country Dairy," just behind our little street, gives quite a rural atmosphere to the whole place. Three cows under a shed constitute the "dairy," and one of them has a bell round her neck. When she shakes her patient head it tinkles with a low, mellow sound, and Sister Charlotte—when in one of her calm, happy moods—will say, as she listens, "Sister Dacie, I feel as if I were on the side of a Swiss mountain, in the heart of a beautiful country."

This is very comforting for me; since foreign travel has often been suggested as likely to do my sister good, though we have never been able to afford it. I think the mignonette in the window-box, to which I devote so much care, has something to say to these pleasant and wholesome fancies, for when the breeze comes stealing in across its crowded ranks of spiral pale-green flowers, our little parlour smells as sweet as though it were some rustic bower. I am always very glad when anything has a soothing effect

upon Sister Charlotte, and so is Kezia, for at times——

However, I must try to tell my story; to put in all the pretty glancing lights—and the grey and black shadows, too—without saying anything ill-natured or hard of any one.

First of all, I had perhaps better explain how I came to have such an outlandish name. Not long before I was born, my good mother, piously reading her Bible, was struck with the title of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, and straightway, when I came into this troublous world, the dark-browed Queen became my name-mother. Candace quickly dwindled, in our nursery days, to Dacie; and, as I settled down into an old maid and Sister Charlotte's nurse, that became, in its turn, Sister Dacie—at your service—a small, brown-haired woman, with insignificant features, and no presence to speak of; easily frightened by the mildest cow lurching along on its way to the meadow, and chronically haunted by the fear of what the horse may do, whenever she drives in cab or brougham, 'bus or Irish car.

Indeed, I can hardly call to mind that I, Candace Birt, am particularly gifted or valuable to my fellow-creatures, looked at in any aspect save one or two very commonplace ones. I have a good stock of patience, and I think I am rather a good hand at loving, when I set myself to it—tenacious in my hold, I mean, and made happy by little things.

As to Sister Charlotte, she is five years older than I am, and was once a beauty. Hers is a story to make your heart bleed in the thinking of it; the story of a love which had to be laid aside, beaten down, buried out of sight; and which turned to bitterness in the end. Upstairs

in the front bedroom, in an old box that is never opened, lies what was to have been her wedding-dress. I dare say its folds would all fall asunder now if they were opened out, and that the sprigs of lavender she made me scatter over it, are nothing but little flecks of grey dust. Happy and beautiful, loving and loved, so soon to be a bride—then came the end. I mean the end to the love-story. An unheeding step on the stairs, a fall, a twisted limb, a face pale with anguish and fear, and then long years upon a couch of feebleness and pain, with no one but Sister Dacie to keep her company. And so it came about that God set my life before me as He would have it. For the thing was plain enough, as any one with half an eye could see; and so I told Mr. Green. He was the curate, and I had helped him a good deal in his work among the poor. I had even fancied that I might be of still greater help to him in a time to come. I had fancied that he thought so too. But now, there lay what could not be put aside straight before my face, and I told him that, that was how it must be, since Charlotte (we used to call her Lottie then) and I stood alone in the world, and had no one but each other. Mr. Green—I know it is not a romantic name, but it had grown to have a sort of music of its own for me—looked at me very gravely while I told him all about our trouble, and what the doctors said about Sister Charlotte. Then he turned aside a few moments, and I squeezed one of my hands in the other as tight as I could to keep the tears from starting.

It may seem rather a foolish thing to mention, and rather improbable, too, to some people, but he kissed my hand when he went away. I had on black gloves stitched with violet, and I kept the one his lips had touched; I kept it always. It is in the upper part of my desk under a heap of old letters. Every woman likes to think some bit of homage has been given to her in her life; and the little black glove means all kinds of dead possibilities to me.

This was how it came about that Sister Charlotte and I set out upon our life's journey together, each with our broken story; but hers so much the sadder and more pitiful of the two, that mine hardly deserves thinking of beside it, and has only been mentioned as a passing detail.

I see that I have mentioned Kezia, therefore I had better explain who she is.

She is our household factotum, our right hand; now and again, our tyrant.

Kezia is shaped like a cheap wooden doll. Her mouth, wide and thin-lipped, becomes a mere transverse line when she is in one of her obstinate moods. Her face is lined and wrinkled like the rind of an apple that has been laid by towards the Christmas mince-meat; her eye, keen, and for ever closely focussed upon the petty tradesman, distrusting him with a steady persistency; her gait, jerky, angular, and—when things in the house go criss-cross—spasmodic, is at times trying to an invalid. Indeed, I have a difficult part to play between the two of them sometimes. I mean with Sister Charlotte and Kezia, though, to be sure, no one who knows Sister Charlotte's story, could wonder at any irritability on her part; and, as to Kezia, I have only shown one side of her yet, and that the rough one. The gap between heroism and obstinacy is often not a wide one, and easily bridged over. Perhaps heroism is only obstinacy disciplined and sanctified.

At all events, if the rough side of Kezia was obstinacy, the softer side was heroism.

Once upon a time, Sister Charlotte being in a state of greater suffering than usual, I happened to be sent for on an errand that could take no denial. On a certain night during my absence, our good doctor ordered Sister Charlotte an opiate to lull pain and procure sleep. The potion was given, and the sufferer slept.

Kezia, always beset with fears of burglars, and doubly careful in Miss Dacie's absence, went round the house to see that all fastenings were secure. By some evil chance she got the fingers of her hands jammed in the window sash, and found herself a prisoner. She was in the room below that in which Sister Charlotte lay asleep. There Kezia remained, caught like a rat in a trap, silent, uncomplaining, all through the long hours of darkness; waiting in quiet, resolute endurance for the dawn that would mean help and deliverance.

The commonplace treads on the heels of the sublime. The milkman was Kezia's Perseus; and, as the strain relaxed, as the poor, crushed fingers—purple with the long-continued pressure—were set free, the faithful creature fell back without life or motion, as true a martyr as ever was bound to wheel or stake.

Her own account of the affair was simple enough.

"If I'd set up a noise, happen I might

have waked Miss Charlotte, an' I know'd that 'ud be a bad job when she'd took the sleepin' stuff; so I thought I'd best bide."

So Kezia "bided;" and no one can wonder that, from that time, we looked upon her rough, north-country ways as the hard husk that held a tender and juicy kernel. As for Sister Charlotte, when I told her all about that vigil of pain, she lay quite still, with her face to the wall, for a bit, and then asked for her handkerchief.

"I think I must have taken a little cold in my head, when you kept the window open so late the other evening, Sister Dacie," she said. That is the way with Sister Charlotte: she had to beat down all the tender impulses of her nature so cruelly once, that now they seldom show signs of life, and, if they do, she ignores them. But I noticed that she was very tolerant of Kezia's peculiarities for a long time to come.

I have seemingly wandered far from the no-thoroughfare that calls itself Prospect Place, apparently in the pure spirit of irony, since neither side has any prospect at all, save into the windows of the side opposite.

We at number eight have one distinct advantage over our neighbours. In our back-garden towers a tall and stately poplar-tree, looking, I doubt not, sadly out of place, ridiculously like a very big plant in a very little flower-pot to many eyes, but a mine of content to us, who are quite given, indeed, to dating our small household record of events from its seasons. In spring, golden scrolls, formed of myriad buds, creep up its bare, brown sides; these in their turn grow green, expand, and rustle pleasantly as the wind stirs them. Quite a colony of birds inhabit the branches of this tree of ours, chasing each other up and down its stately height, querulous, chirping, happy little creatures, warily watched by the black cat next door, who squats upon the wall, and turns a pair of green eyes upwards, longingly, then feigns a dreamless sleep, in the hope that some too trustful songster may hop within reach of her stealthy claw. We like to hear the soft swirl of the poplar's plumed head in the autumn wind, and measure the fall of the year by the leaves that strew the garden with a brown-and-amber carpet. It is not much to pride oneself upon, I dare say; but still, we consider our poplar-tree a distinction.

As to the house itself, I am not in a

position to deny that it has its defects. The back parlours are darker than might be wished, and the most indiscreet revelations as to the garments of the neighbours on either side, are, as it were, forced upon one's reluctant observation on washing-days—epochs which seem to be moveable feasts, usually celebrated upon any day that a visitor from the country stays to lunch with us.

The front parlour is consecrated to Sister Charlotte; and there I congregate together everything that is best and brightest of our joint possessions. To one whom infirmity chains to a couch, the room in which her life is passed is her world. And I always bear this in mind, bringing home a bunch of flowers from the green-grocer's round the corner, whenever I can, and setting them out to the best advantage in an old china bowl which belonged to a great-aunt of ours, and always stands on the little table in the window. Sometimes Sister Charlotte will notice the flowers, and sometimes she will not; but there is always the chance that she may, and that is something. Even when they are cheapest, I never bring home roses. They used to be my sister's favourite flowers; and her lover had brought her a bunch of them on that fatal day long ago, when one false step blighted two lives, and all the roses died out of hers for ever.

I really flatter myself that our front parlour is a credit to us; for, though the chairs are old and spindle-legged, they have an air of well-preserved gentility; and the centre ottoman which Charlotte and I worked when we were two slips of girls, is no ordinary piece of furniture, and is most useful in preventing people knocking their heads against the chandelier. That chandelier is a scar, a defect, as we are always ready to acknowledge. But, then, as Sister Charlotte pithily observes, "Are there not spots even upon the sun? Why, therefore, should we expect perfection to be ours in every detail of household arrangement?"

The great thing is to bear that chandelier in mind, and not get up too suddenly when seated on the centre ottoman. So that, you see, nothing more than a little care and thought is needed to make things thoroughly smooth and comfortable.

Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, has passed over our heads in Prospect Place, and each has shown but little variation. Our dear invalid being a little better or a little

worse; the enormities of the neighbouring tradesmen as reported by Kezia; the reprehensible conduct of the postman in coming to us on New Year's morning decidedly the worse for the refreshment partaken of so early in the day; these, and such-like ups and downs, formed the ripples on our shallow sea.

Of course, there were always our Indian letters, which had to be read, and re-read, and brightened up all the week, and which had to be answered—I writing, and Sister Charlotte dictating, and Kezia putting in a message with "her duty" to Master Randall. As a matter of fact, our brother Randall is Major in the Madras Native Infantry; but titles of any kind are but as empty sounds to Kezia, she having been known to speak of our most gracious sovereign lady as "Mrs. Victory," so "Captain Randall Birt, M.N.I.," was just "Master Randall" to Kezia, and would remain so, in spite of any giddy heights of promotion to which he might attain. These letters, coming to us from a far-off land, are among the bright and sun-tipped ripples of our lives—things to talk over, and dwell upon to our friends; events that give a certain stamp to us in our grey existence, as those who possessed distinguished relatives abroad.

"Have you heard from India lately?" was a common form of enquiry put by our visitors, not without some reverence and awe, and addressed to us as though that mighty continent were in some sort annexed to Prospect Place, and our brother were Governor-General, at least. At this Sister Charlotte would bridle, and, so to speak, prance a little on her sofa, bringing out bits of Randall's last letter with an air of reservation, as who should say: "More remains behind, but I wish to give you only such information as is likely not to cause you any inconvenient emotion of astonishment."

All this was very delightful to us both; for, though I seldom said much, I always sat by, and nodded and smiled at all the full stops.

Randall is some years younger than either of us, and still, in Kezia's estimation at least, but "a bold sauce-box of a little chap as you'd see in a day's journey," though, in reality, as he has several times told us in his letters, growing bald on the crown, and showing various other ill-effects of his fifteen years' service in India.

It is strange how different things appear

seen through different mediums. Never had the front parlour at Prospect Place seemed so old-fashioned, never had the chandelier seemed so assertive, as when I stood looking at it all, with a letter of Randall's in my hand—a letter that held for us, his sisters, a wonderful message.

Our brother is coming home—will, indeed, be with us almost as soon as his letter.

He has had fever and ague; he will need care and nursing. I am all in a tremble at this marvellous news, and soon I can see neither parlour nor chandelier for the rising tears. It seems so strange that mother should not be here to welcome back the boy who left her fifteen years ago; that there are only Charlotte and Dacie to greet him. But he is not a boy now.

I must remember that. I must ponder on the little bald patch that he has told us of among his curly locks. I must try and put from my mind the slender stripling who caught me for one wild moment to his breast; the boy whose hot tears fell like rain upon my face; the boy cried to me between the sobs to go to the mother whom he never saw again, and then pushed me from him and passed me by. I must forget all this, and think of my brother as a man of the world, a man of experience, a man of mark and position.

There is one thing upon which I really think we may congratulate ourselves. The poplar-tree is at its very best; the golden scrolls, embroidered by the hand of Spring, make it quite beautiful, and tender tufts of leaves are all about its plume-like head.

I feel that our brother Randall will be impressed by it; and I am glad the poplar-tree has put on such a pretty dress to welcome the boy home.

I know it sounds ridiculous to speak of Randall as "the boy;" but mother did so to the last.

"Tell the boy," she said, "that I——"
Tell the boy—what?

We knew not; for, on the wing of that half-uttered message, the loving spirit passed. It was something sweet, for there was a smile upon her lips in the saying of it—a smile that lingered in her dead face to the last.

And now the boy is coming home, and she is not here to give him greeting.

CHAPTER II. AFTER LONG YEARS.

RANDALL has been home nearly a month now. I cannot deny that his first appear-

ance was something of a surprise to us. Indeed, Kezia fell down the kitchen-stairs with a crash in her agitation and dismay.

"Yon!" she said, "does yon be Master Randall? Lord ha' mussy on us all, Miss Dacie, this here blessed day!"

Then she flung her apron over her head, so as to guard against a second shock, and sat down behind the scullery-door—a retreat she much affected in difficult moments.

As for Sister Charlotte and myself, we certainly thought our brother both shorter and stouter in figure than we had imagined him to be. In thinking of him as our family hero, we had drawn out his proportions in our mind's eye, forgetting that he had never been among the great ones of the earth. However, when he laughed, we recognised "the boy" by the old twinkle in his eyes, and Charlotte came to think that the bald patch on his crown conferred a certain dignity upon him.

He expressed himself charmed with Prospect Place, and quite fell in with our estimation of the poplar-tree. Of course there was much pathos underlying our pleasure in Randall's home-coming; and it was nearly a week before any one of the three of us spoke of mother. Sister Charlotte's sad story, too, was for a time untouched upon; but one night, after she had gone to bed, Randall and I spoke of it together.

Telling a thing is always quite different to writing it; and I think my brother understood the matter after this conversation much better than he had done before. I wished that he might do so, because he would then be more ready to make allowance for—well, be good and patient with Charlotte when one of her bad days came. All the more so, since I could fully explain to him how the doctors were of opinion that a strong, nervous, and hysterical element had latterly taken the place of actual disease in our sister's condition, and that she was very reluctant to allow that perhaps less care and nursing were needful than heretofore, and that a little effort on her own part was occasionally called for.

My tears fell fast as I told him about the wedding-dress laid by in the old box upstairs, with the sprigs of lavender lying here and there among the folds. After we had done talking about poor Lottie, Randall put a sudden question to me.

"There was a Mr.—White—or was it Brown, we used to tease you about, Dacie?"

What became of him? He had Sunday Schools on the brain, if I remember rightly; but was a good little man, take him all round."

"Very good; his name was Green. He left the parish shortly after Lottie's accident. He—went abroad. Perhaps, you will remember he always had a great idea of missionary work."

Randall looked at me sharply for a moment, and then he laid his hand upon my shoulder, and patted me ever so gently. "Poor lass!" he said, and kissed me long and tenderly.

I really could not see anything for a moment or two, and, when I looked up, my brother was gone. I laughed as I lighted my candle to go to bed.

Fancy being called a "lass" at my time of life!

But it was all very sweet; like some softening balsam laid upon the scar of an old wound.

As time went on we saw what havoc Indian service had played with Randall's constitution.

He was always suffering from what he calls jungle ague. He was always either in a hot fit, or a fit of chills, or getting better from the two combined. It may therefore well be imagined that he needed all the cheerful society we could get for him, and that when Sister Charlotte had one of her bad days at the same time that Randall either burnt, or shivered, or did each alternately, Kezia and I were rather hard pressed. Fortunately it was spring-time, and several of our nicest hand-organs began to pay periodical visits to Prospect Place, while the one with a monkey returned from a long visit to the south-coast watering places, and Randall was quite amused by the little creature's recognition of me, and his efforts to embrace Kezia.

Still, as I said to Sister Charlotte, these are amusements which pall upon a man accustomed to a wider sphere and larger aspects of nature, and it is also detrimental for a person to concentrate himself upon his own ailments; to watch himself shake with ague, and speculate upon his probable temperature when in the clutch of fever. The taking of large doses of quinine can hardly be looked upon, either, as an enlivening manner of passing the time away; and, in short, a small tea-party appeared to me the thing called for at such a crisis. Kezia had to have a week's notice at least on such an occasion; for jumbles, and sponge-cakes that will stand up straight and

spiky, are not things to be undertaken lightly, or trifled with in the execution.

Of course we decided that this entertainment of ours must be the selectest thing possible, including only the very *crème-de-la-crème* of our circle of friends.

Necessarily we must ask Mrs. Alison McGregor. Military people understand one another. There is a certain "tone" about them that ensures mutual appreciation. Then, both my brother and Mrs. McGregor had been in India—a fact which alone must draw them naturally the one to the other. Lucille—we call Mrs. McGregor by her Christian name, for we are really quite intimate with her—had been away on a visit to some relatives of her late husband, and that was how it comes about that she and Randall had not met before.

Lucille is, in our estimation, a charming person, and I felt sure she would look upon it as a Christian duty to assist us in cheering and amusing my brother, and helping him over his hot fits, and his cold fits, and the periods of depression that came between. She was a woman of that pleasant, hazy age called "about thirty," slight and graceful in figure, and of a naturally bright and gentle disposition. We had never known her in the craped and capped condition of widowhood; and from all we had heard, she must have been glad to lay aside with those trappings of woe, all remembrance of the late Colonel Alison McGregor, except such slender kindly memories as survive in a womanly heart, while all the blacker records of the past are blotted out.

Lucille had a quantity of bright brown hair piled high upon her head, in a fashion but rarely seen. She had quiet, grey eyes that looked sad enough at times, and yet sparkled merrily when she sat beside poor Lottie's couch and told her something droll to charm the pain away for the moment.

We had never heard anything but what was good of Alison McGregor's widow. With the poor materials Fate had given her, she made as good a home as she could for the man whose evil temper and selfish tyranny did their best to blight her young life altogether. Unprotected by the shield of a husband's love and care, she had to face all the temptations of social surroundings, in which adulation is to be had by any woman who chooses to accept it—and to face them alone. In this trying position her womanly dignity did not desert her. She had many friends, but no lover;

managed to be thoroughly popular, but was never "talked about;" remained domestic and home-loving, where many would have been the contrary; mourned the temper of her Colonel; suffered his cruelties—for it had come to that—with dignity and patience, making no moan and asking for no pity; and nursed him with devotion when the end came.

What more could mortal woman do to merit the love and tenderness of other women, and the reverence of men?

We told Randall her sad story, and he took the kindest interest in it all. He said such women were the "salt of the earth," which I thought neatly put. He said that to come out purified and strengthened from such trials, was a higher and, in one sense, better lot than the happiest life could ever attain to; and that before such a woman he would stand bare-headed, as though on holy ground. He said it was such an easy thing for a woman to lead a good life, and make a good end, if she had a happy home about her and a good husband to walk through life beside her. She ought to be ashamed of herself if she didn't. But when there was nothing to help, and anything to hinder, then came the "tug of war." This was Randall's military way of putting things, of course, and I thought it very telling.

We were quite delighted to see him take such a warm interest in anything, and I told Kezia, who was mixing the batter for the jumbles, that the Captain seemed to like being told about Mrs. McGregor, and all her troubles; to which Kezia replied: "Does he now, ma'am? Well, any one would, you know. She's that sort, you see—so bright and pleasant-spoke—what you may call takin' in her ways, ain't she, now? And it's loike enoo'—"

But here Kezia stopped short, stared hard at me—rather rudely, I thought. Then she opened her mouth as if to speak again—I could almost have fancied, to say something unpleasant. Anyway, she thought better of it, whatever it was; closed her thin lips tight in the transverse line of which I have spoken elsewhere, and set to stirring the batter like mad.

That is the worst of Kezia—she is not always as respectful as she might be. But I find it easy to forgive her anything, if I just glance at the front parlour window. By the way, Randall tried to speak a word to her about that night of martyrdom, and I am sorry to say she retreated to the kitchen, and slammed the door in his face.

Nothing could be more successful than our tea party. The jumbles were light as snowflakes; the sponge-cake, in the middle of the table, was like a minaretted tower. Lucille, too, who had only returned home the day before, looked her best. She wore a pale grey dress, and a bunch of pink erica, and looked altogether delightful. Randall was most kind to her; and they chatted away together in the back-parlour—for this was an occasion that called for the opening of the folding-doors—all about India and Indian ways, and Indian life, until it really seemed as if they might have known each other all their lives. This was, of course, highly satisfactory; and Charlotte, receiving our friends as she lay in state, as it were, upon her sofa, nodded and smiled, and even went as near to winking as a lady may, every time I looked at her. Indeed, I hardly knew Randall, so different did he appear from anything he had shown us of himself since his return. For the time being, I am convinced he had forgotten all about the hot fits and the cold fits, and the depression in between; and, for the first time, really enjoyed himself. Twice he sang—the old, old songs that I remembered long ago—and sang them with such pathos that the tears rose to my silly old eyes, and a choking came in my throat. I seemed to see him once more, a boy with golden curls, dressed in a little black-velvet dress, called, if I remember right, a “Spanish suit,” standing by mother’s knee, with one hand clasped in hers, and lifting up his clear, sweet voice, like a young thrush in spring-time. Oh! the pride in her dear, loving face, as she listened! Woe betide the careless one who should break that flow of harmony by the slightest jarring sound! Woe betide the guest whose attention might be suspected of wandering even for a moment!

The old songs called up the old memories; and when I heard our excellent Vicar, the Rev. Abner Candytuft, in his flowery fashion, entreating my brother to “allow himself to be prevailed upon to sing once more,” I had hardly voice to add my own request—in simpler language—to his.

Randall did sing again. He gave us, “Oft in the still night,” and though the freshness of his voice was gone, the pathos remained, and our guests listened entranced, while once more my own thoughts centred on the past, for that song was one of mother’s favourites in the dear days of long ago.

After this Lucille joined her soft contralto notes to Randall’s tenor in one or two simple, old-fashioned duets. They said it was wonderful how their voices harmonised; as, indeed, it was, considering they had never sung together before. Altogether, our tea-party may said to have been a great success, and I felt sure that such cheerful and refined society must be an admirable thing to divert Randall’s mind, and prevent him dwelling upon the state of his health.

I said so next morning to Kezia, and I must say her behaviour struck me at the time as not exactly what it ought to be. It has been said that old and trusted servants are apt to take too much license towards their betters, and I felt upon this occasion that there was some truth in the saying. Kezia looked at me, and burst into a short, quickly-suppressed laugh; and then went into the scullery, threw her apron over her head, and sat down behind the door after her usual fashion. I did not choose to stay and argue with her.

I told Sister Charlotte of Kezia’s conduct, and she mentioned it to Randall, who was evidently much displeased, for he flushed up to the roots of his hair, so that I really feared it might bring on one of his fever-fits.

However, no ill effects ensued, and we were both quite pleased to find that, on one occasion, he had—when out for a walk in that direction—called upon, and had tea with, Lucille.

“There can be nothing,” said Sister Charlotte, oracularly, “like bringing those together who have sympathies and experiences in common. I already see a vast change for the better in our brother Randall; he takes a livelier interest in things, takes a pride in himself, and—yes, Sister Dacie—I am really convinced that his ague fits are fewer and farther between.”

Which was certainly the case.

After this, he got quite into the habit of taking tea with Lucille, and, if he chanced to go out of an afternoon, Kezia never brought in more than two cups.

Kezia is certainly a most extraordinary woman, and takes the oddest notions into her head; she evidently fancies that our Randall is going back to India again, for she asked me if we should want “the extra girl when the Major was away.” Now, I had told her that Randall had gone upon half-pay, and I thought her rather wooden-headed in the matter. I

told him so; and then I was sorry I had mentioned it, he got so red and looked so fierce.

"Kezia is a meddling old woman," he said, "and I don't see why you and Lottie should talk over your own affairs and other people's too, with a person of that sort; however, Kezia is quite right, I am going away—not very far, though, Dacie. I am going to marry Mrs. McGregor."

I heard a gasp from the sofa, and knew that Sister Charlotte was going to have one of her hysterical attacks, so I had no time to stop and think what my own feelings were at this announcement. I called Kezia, and sent Randall away, fearing that the sight of him might cause renewed paroxysms; and then I said—with as casual an air as I could well summon up:

"Miss Charlotte is upset by some sudden news: the Major is—going to be married."

"I knowed it," said Kezia, stolidly.

She did not ask who the lady was, neither did I say. We just employed ourselves in rubbing the palms of Sister Charlotte's hands, and putting smelling-salts and aromatic vinegar to her nose.

She revived more quickly and completely than is usual with her on such occasions, and, rather to my surprise, sat up and began to talk quite cheerfully of Randall's engagement.

After all, when we came to consider the matter calmly and dispassionately, what had we to find fault with?

Lucille had made a good wife to a very bad husband. The departed McGregor had been an ill-tempered and ill-conditioned man all round. She had humoured him. She had made the best of him. Randall—especially when a little aqueish—was inclined to be irritable; she would humour him. She had been proved in the fire of trial, and had come forth strengthened and purified. There was no doubt as to how she would "turn out;" the past was a guarantee for the future.

Then—as Sister Charlotte observed—"What is so natural as that military people should take to one another?"

Kezia came in with the tea.

Only two cups stood on the tray.

"The Major is not out," I said, with a glance at the table.

"He will be," said she; and, true enough, at that moment down came Randall, with his light dust-coat on, and his gloves in his hand. He stood there, looking at us;

and oh! what kind, sweet eyes he has! They are just like mother's, with the very same look of light and love, when he is happy and pleased.

"Have you two anything to say to me?" he said.

Kezia—failing in her usual good manners—stood at the door as if spell-bound. Sister Charlotte lay back on the sofa and closed her eyes.

As for me, I just caught Randall round the neck and hugged him. At which Kezia ran madly down the kitchen-stair, gurgling and sobbing as she went.

"There—there—that will do," said Randall; "and now, have you anything to say to—Lucille?"

Sister Charlotte sat up suddenly.

"Bring her back with you," she said, and lay down again.

There never was such a woman for taking a sound, practical, common-sense view of things as Sister Charlotte!

GOSSIP ON BEAUTY.

I WONDER whether that line in a certain poem, "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be pretty," ever gave contentment to the maiden who read it, and realised, after a look in the glass, that she was one of those to whom the circular letter of counsel was addressed. Certainly virtue is of vastly more worth than beauty; but how delicious it must be to be supremely beautiful! The tribute paid by the world to the good is not, on the whole, despicable; but it is in that curious cold currency of esteem, which is so seldom received at its right value. On the other hand, the adoration that beauty compels is in the eyes of the multitude. There is no mistaking it, nor will it bear depreciation. "Oh, I am beautiful; I am really beautiful," sobs to herself, with a thrill of ecstasy, the enchanted girl who has marked—and, let us hope, with bashful colour in her cheeks—the gaze of the world upon her, perhaps for the first time. There is more conviction in admiring eyes than in the looking-glass, and the ten thousand apostrophes of a lady's-maid.

And yet, is there so much in beauty as we are prone to think? Of course, I do not refer to the estimate formed by the young. That is nothing less than chimerical. At a certain epoch of our life we are intoxicated by a pretty face. There is no thinking of aught else while the memory of

it is fresh; and if the pretty face itself be ever before us, we are led irresistibly to sacrifice to it in one foolish way or another. At such a time the person who talks to us in a tone of frigid calculation, about our imbecility, risks his life. We cast his words back in his teeth, if we do no worse; and anathematise him both for his blindness and his impertinence. It is the fervid time when there is no sunlight to equal the radiance of a maiden's eyes; when we could better dispense with all the planetary systems than her sweet glances—

O looke, O shine, O let me die, and see.

It was all very well for Guido Guinicelli to sing, six and a half centuries ago, about Cupid's predilections for tender natures. The little rascal is quite indiscriminate in his wooings for temporary domicile. And one may imagine with what a scoff of stern passion the love-torn soul of the average youth of our own dear land may welcome Guido's tranquil words:

Within the gentle heart Love shelters him,
As birds within the green shade of the grove.
Before the gentle heart in Nature's scheme,
Love was not, nor the gentle heart ere Love.

But to return. Do not even we who have done with delirium pay too great homage to beauty? Yes, without doubt, say certain of our instructors. You bow the knee to a mere attribute which, in spite of Plato and all his class, argues no essential and sterling merit in the possessor. It were different, of course, could the beautiful woman share her sweet dower with others, like the inheritor of a colossal fortune. Or if she could strike forth from it something of service to the race, like the person of uncommon mental gifts. But beauty is powerless to serve any one except the possessor; and the service it renders her is very often of the most lamentable kind. No, friends, say these teachers; you degrade yourselves in bending the knee to a girl just because she has bright eyes, a fine figure, or a lovely complexion; and you injure her by making her esteem herself above her worth.

So far in opposition. But it must be remembered that these detractors of the beautiful are frequently people of a mature age who, by a severe course of discipline, have weaned themselves from the simple and natural tastes which belong to most of us. Also—and it must be said in sorrow—they are not seldom persons of the softer sex, who, being uncomely themselves, make a systematic war upon comeliness in others.

Their hearts are of marble, and their intelligences steeped in gall. Shall they, then, assume to answer for the rest of us? I trow not. Let them take a place on the platform by the side of the fair whom they assail, and let their arguments be weighed against the silent face of their victim.

I fear, in such a case, their rhetoric would speed unheard to the ceiling, while we of the jury offered sacrifice of our eyes and judgement at the same time.

Sydney Smith may speak on this subject for the majority: "The information of very plain women is so inconsiderable, that I set . . . no very great store by it. . . . Where I have seen fine eyes, a beautiful complexion, grace and symmetry in women, I have generally thought them amazingly well-informed and extremely philosophical. In contrary instances, seldom or never."

What do children think of beauty? The question is worth asking, if only that the answer may show that there is no rule absolute of beauty, whereby the old and the young alike are brought under its sway. But according to the philosopher Tucker—for whose coarseness we offer apology to those who require it—"one cannot discover that little children have any notion of beauty at all; they will turn away from the sight of a celebrated toast, with all her tackle, trim, and bravery on, to hide their faces in the flabby bosom of an old, wrinkled nurse."

Tucker speaks for the seventeenth century. I am disposed to think the children of our age are a little shrewder in this particular. An American of five or six is apt to be a keen critic of the physiognomy. But this precocity cannot be taken as the standard, and so the fact may stand unchanged that, to the child, there is no such thing as beauty.

On the other hand, what have the old—who know all that human life can teach—to say upon this subject? Do they hail with immeasurable joy the promise of great beauty in their grandchildren? Not exactly. Yet are they not insensible to the worth of this dower of Nature. They regard it as a boon—but a boon hedged with so many counterbalancing perils, that it is doubtful whether it be or be not a blessing.

Who does not know the kind of exclamations uttered by a knot of veterans when a pretty girl enters the room? "Ah, she has a future, poor thing!" "She will slay her thousands some day!" "I hope her heart is as sweet as her face!" "We

are best off; we can look at her and retain our senses, while those youngsters do not know whether they are on their heads or their heels." And so forth.

It is a moot point whether a life of obscurity or of conspicuousness is the better life. It depends upon the subject. But, whatever her inclinations may be, the pretty girl is, as a rule, not allowed to bloom in secret. The world conspires that it may see much of her. Thus there is like to be an excessive test of her various faculties. Her sisters, who are plain, go through life smoothly enough upon their average allotment of virtues and wits. But she finds herself in strange situations for which she is wholly unprepared. How, then, may she keep her footing, unless she be gifted in heart and head as liberally as in the sunshine of her face?

Doubtless it was the realisation of the more prominent position in the walk of life which beauty afforded a person, with the accompanying exercise of the faculties of the mind, that largely led the old Greeks to assume that a beautiful body was the habitation of an uncommon mind.

It is curious, always instructive, but not always edifying, to mark the brisk maturing of a pretty girl. She is in the way of the friction of life. Sometimes it is genuinely educative to her; but she must not have stones of censure cast at her if it be otherwise, for that is what it is most apt to be. She needs more bulwarks than her sisters.

"Beauty, where there is a beam of light to show the virtues of the mind, is a blessing to be wished for," says Mrs. Delany, speaking both from experience and knowledge, "but if its allurements only discover folly and sin, it is then a curse indeed."

There is, in truth, no sager person of the world than a discreet "beauty" in her fifth season, unless it be an old woman who, in her day, made wide havoc among the hearts of mankind. Instinctively they accept the impulse which leads them to exclaim with Corisca, in "The Faithful Shepherd:" "What use is beauty if it be not seen? . . . It is a beautiful woman's honour and glory to be loved of many."

Our beauty is to us,
As fierceness to the lion,
As genius to man—

Let us then use it while we have it.

And in the time of afterglow, when many a fair face is itself again, in spite of wrinkles and grey hair, they can live through the days of their youth once more

in recalling the haps and hazards they incurred in this declaration of their beauty before the eyes of the world.

when'er a thought I cast
On all the joys of youth and beauty pass'd,
To find in pleasures I have had my part,
Still warms me to the bottom of my heart.

But if, to children, beauty is as if it were not, and to the old something upon which to impale a moral rather than to defer to, how does it affect the rest of us, who make the great majority? Do we agree with the detractor, who,

To all apparent beauties blind,
tries to convince us that the admirer of beauty is on a par with the heathen of Central Africa, who humble themselves before fetishes of wood and stone? We do not agree with her. Her words may be listened to in default of other employment, but at sight of a fair face they are forgotten, like the tissue of a dream an hour after waking. There is something so divine about beauty, that even when we feel no overwhelming affection for a beautiful woman, we cannot but think of her with a sort of reverence—and this, strange to say, though she be in truth no very good woman in character and disposition.

As for the charge that beauty is powerless to serve any one except its possessor, it really needs no refutation. What of the inspiration that in all ages has flashed forth from bright eyes? Is there no dynamic force in that? Cannot such inspiration carry a man farther than the hope of pecuniary reward, or of Victoria Crosses, and other public marks of distinction—farther even than the purest spirit of patriotism? Surely there is no disputing it. Something might be said about the age of chivalry, in particular, upon this subject. But it was an age less truly chivalrous than one is disposed to fancy that it was. Only in its assumptions may we recall it. "God and the ladies" was the watchword of those times; and though as a rule there was as little genuine respect paid to the ladies as to the Deity by the knights of the Middle Ages, there were not wanting some noble souls who were as ready to die for the sake of the fair, as for what in all earnestness they conceived to be "the honour and glory of God," in Palestine and elsewhere.

But there is no need to search the records of past centuries for instances of the high inspiration of beauty. Every town has its hundreds of men at this

moment who work by no other light than this: "If only I may win her love, I shall be content. But she is so pure and spotless a being, such an angel upon earth, that I almost despair of being able to do that which shall win her. Almost, but not quite. And so I will do my best, and Heaven guide the issue."

Every village has its one man, at fewest, who stands the more upright for the thought that the girl of his admiration may be looking at him, and whose mind is, for the moment, at least, freed from all base and unholy ideas. And, far and wide, on every sea, and in every land, there are men going to and fro, whose better natures are kept fortified mainly by this same ennobling hope—that one day such an one may find him worthy of her.

Beauty of no service save to the possessor! Why, it is the very essence of the ideal, which leavens into fertility our somewhat dull and cloddish masculine nature! From the days of Troy, battles have been won through it. Art has ever ardently acknowledged that there is no influence in life to equal it. And literature is in the same case. "Never," says Alfieri, "did I find myself in a fitter state for literary work than when I was actuated by the desire to present my productions to her who inspired me with this omnipotent passion."

Beauty is, indeed, often the very breath of life to the imagination. Without the fair face of Laura, Petrarch's sweet verse could never have had being. Had not Dante known Beatrice, we should have lost much. And so on in a thousand instances. Beauty is the completest of intellectual alchemists. The man who heretofore has stammered out his thoughts with pain and effort, suddenly finds his tongue loosed. He is eloquent all at once, to a marvel; and a fair face is the sole cause of it.

Stella, the only planet of my light,
Light of my life, and life of my desire,
Chief good whereto my hope doth only aspire,
World of my wealth, and heaven of my delight.

Nothing may invigorate the weak man like beauty; even as, contrariwise, the strong man may be shorn of his strength by it.

Since beauty is so potent an influence upon those who may be called the bone and gristle of mankind, no one can deny that it is worth possessing, even apart from the intrinsic pleasure that the possessor derives from it. The lot of the beautiful woman who is not a victim to inordinate

vanity, is probably the happiest in life. She has all the celebrity attained at infinite cost by men of action; and she has also the sweet assurance that, unlike many men of distinction, she wins hearts by intimacy, even as she wins reputation at the hands of Fame. And this, too, in the days of her youth, at a time of life when men are but beginning the battle for renown which they so seldom win until they are grey-headed!

But the reverse of the picture ought not to be overlooked. I mean the case of a woman, whose conceit is as inordinate as her beauty. She is as much to be pitied as her sister is to be envied. The world is always ready to accept the disposition of the beautiful woman as a necessary and inevitable part of her. If she be modest and considerate of others, she is angelic; and though scandal may whisper lies about her, she remains angelic in the hearts of her admirers. But if she be vain, the world straightway jumps to the conclusion that she has all the other failings and vices which have immediate or collateral connection with that very fatal characteristic. "Give her compliments, my dear fellow, as you give a child sugar-plums—and she'll take them as greedily. She's a pretty creature, and she will go all lengths; such women always do." Such is the standard criticism of the world upon her. And when once it is passed there is no disputing it. For in the first place, it is never passed without substantial reason; and, in the second place, after sentence, it were a herculean task even to assume to be other than as vain as the world judges her.

Whether married or single, the vain woman is doomed to find her beauty anything rather than a blessing. She does not conciliate her own sex, and she piques and goads mankind into an unsatisfactory state of adoration, which never endures long. Her victims all withdraw from her sooner or later, and they do not look back upon their servitude with any pleasure. And it is often her melancholy fate, after a while, to find herself still the possessor of as much beauty as ever she had, but with never a suitor. The men are ready enough to smile and jest with her; but they know her too well to care to go farther. And, in the end, she has actually to lure and scheme for a husband with as much tedious assiduity as if she were both ugly and past the thirties. The married life that follows need not be analysed. It is a terrible satire on what is called "connubial felicity."

In conclusion, perhaps it may be asked of me to define this "beauty" which is so responsible, and yet, on the whole, so desirable an endowment. But I am glad to be able to evade the task. How would you define a rose? Would you call it a red or white flower at the end of a stalk, generally among leaves, often with thorns round it, and nearly always having a sweet smell? I do not see how you could say more, keeping strictly to the definition. And yet, is this an acceptable description of a rose? To me it seems hardly even to picture it, and not at all to convey an idea of the imperceptible attributes which are partly of the rose and partly subjective in the person who looks at the rose.

It is the same with beauty, only in a much stronger degree. Fancy cataloguing the charms of a beautiful woman! That was the old fashion; and I hope it was found good enough by our worthy forefathers. But though a dim conception of beauty may be obtained through a string of terms like "a cherry lip," "teeth of pearls," "a nose and chin of pure ivory," "prettie little ears of coral," "swan-like neck," "Lilliputian hands and feet," and the other conventional phrases of eulogy, the beauty herself thus portrayed is at the best wholly inanimate. She does not even command as much admiration as a Greek statue.

And, again, to substitute an abstract definition for one made up of genuine human details, try if this of Edmund Burke's be any more consoling to the fancy:

"The qualities of beauty, as they are merely sensible qualities, are the following: First, to be comparatively small. Second, to be smooth. Third, to have a variety in the direction of the parts; but Fourth, to have those parts not angular, but melted, as it were, into each other. Fifth, to be of a delicate frame, without any remarkable appearance of strength. Sixth, to have its colours clear and bright, but not very strong and glaring. Seventh, or if it should have any glaring colour, to have it diversified with others."

This has very little effect upon the mind of a man. I hope Burke never knew the candid opinion of a woman about the definition.

Is beauty then indefinable? Surely, if by definition be meant such a portraiture as shall seem good to you and me and all the world. The woman I call beautiful may not please you; and I may be rude enough to ridicule your choice. And it is

well that this is so. Otherwise, the globe would never have to face the possibility of that over-population, the thought of which gave Malthus the nightmare.

THE CINQUE PORTS.

ENGLAND has changed, physically, since the Norman Conquest. Dunwich is almost gone; half-a-dozen East Yorkshire villages, named and entered in Henry the Eighth's "Liber Regis," are quite gone. There has been compensation, too, such as it is, both in the Lancashire sands, and in the mud at the Wash. But the greatest changes, physical and social, have been in the south-east of Kent. In Roman days, and for some time after, Thanet was cut off by a wide estuary, Portus Rutupinus, by the Saxons called Wantsum, with Rutupia (Richborough) at its south entrance, Regulbium (Reculver), or Rutupia altera, at its northern entrance. Despite gradual shrinking, it was for centuries the regular waterway from France to London. Ships thus escaped the chance of head winds round the Foreland. When Richborough got high and dry, and its water became a marsh, Sandwich was founded further out on the accumulating sands. But the Stour, driven north by the "Eastward Drift," now trickles through a dreary waste, which was once the famous Sandwich bay, and joins the sea under Thanet cliffs, close by the little Bay of Pegwell. Romney lost its harbour chiefly from a different cause: the "inning" of the marshes. Before Roman times, Romney Marsh, still in many parts ten feet below medium high-water mark, was a shallow sea, bounded on the north by the low cliff line from Shorncliff to Hythe and Lymne, on the east by the growing shingle deposit of the "Eastward Drift," unchecked by Dungeness, which had not yet begun to grow out seaward. Who reclaimed the whole triangle of twenty-two thousand acres by building what is called the Rhee wall, from the south-western corner of the shingle bank right up to Appledore, no one knows. It may have been the Belgæ, who were very fairly civilised; if it was the Romans they did it early, for the soil is full of Roman remains of every date. Clearly, it was all done at once; there is no trace of intermediate works. The shingle bank was strengthened into what is now Dymchurch wall; and the Rhee bank, with a channel which turned aside

most of the water of the Lymne, completed the work.

For a time the "inning" of Romney Marsh improved Romney Harbour and the whole Rother estuary; but two causes led to its being silted up, and to Rye and Winchelsea being ruined as seaports, while Romney was compelled to shift seaward and become New Romney. Of these one was the lessening outflow of the rivers, due—they say—to the cutting down of the great Andrede's wood (the Weald); the other, the growth of Dungeness (calculated at from seven to twenty feet per year), which blocked Romney Harbour against the tides and so stopped the "scouring," which had kept it from being choked up. As late as the fourteenth century, Rye was on a hill in a fair tidal harbour, and Winchelsea was only too accessible from the sea, as is proved by its frequent captures by the French. Before this, Denge Marsh—on Dungeness, near Lydd—had been "inned," and so had Walland and other marshes south of the Rhee wall; all the district belonging to Canterbury (given by Offa), and the "innings" being the work of successive Archbishops. Guildford Marsh, however, remained water; and Oxney, between the branches of the Rother, was still an island; indeed, in the great inundation of 1287, which helped to form the Zuyder Zee, Winchelsea, with its eighteen churches, was destroyed, and for a time Rye got deep water.

Winchelsea—the name, interpreted, in a queer mixture of British and Saxon, as Gwent-chesil-ey (level shingle isle)—reminds us of the Chesil Bank, which joins Portland Isle to the Dorset coast, and which is made of pebbles gradually lessening in size as it runs farther out, so that a practised smuggler could, in the darkest night, tell exactly where he had beached his boat by "pesing" (weighing in his hand) a few of the stones.

All these shingle deposits are due to the same cause—the uniform action of wind and tide sweeping along vast masses of sand and shingle; the speed growing as the channel narrows. For three-quarters of the year the prevailing winds are south-west, and they are helped by the flood-tide, which, thanks to the Atlantic tidal-wave, is stronger than the ebb. Stones and sand, therefore, are driven eastward, the latter going farthest, the smaller stones being, as a rule, carried further than the big ones. The shingle beaches are thrown up directly by this two-fold action; the sand-banks—

Goodwin Sands, the shoal that fills Sandwich Harbour, the Dogger Bank, and the Dutch and Belgian sands—are formed where the meeting of tides or currents causes dead-water.

This "eastward drift" has ruined "our English Hansa," as the Cinque Ports have been called, almost as completely as like causes have killed "the dead cities of the Zuyder Zee," and a number of towns along the coast of Provence. Not one has escaped.

Hastings thrives, but not as a port; the first Hastings is under the sea: you can trace it at low water by the rocks which mark the old shore line. When the sea broke in, the shingle followed, the little rivers were choked, and a pebble beach formed, which is the foundation of the parades and terraces. One can measure the extent of these unrecorded changes by noting that an island, a mile and a half long, which in Norden's map, two centuries ago, fronts St. Leonard's, is gone, though no record has been kept of its disappearance.

Dover holds its own, thanks to unlimited expenditure; "its own" being nothing but a winding creek. It has more Roman remains than any of its sister ports: the basement of one "pharos" still stands on the cliff; so did a fragment of the other—the Bredenstone—till it was swept away the other day for some new fortifications. Its name is British. "Dwr," is the little river. Did you never, when walking in Wales, get a drink of "dwr glan" (clear water) at a cottage, and mark, if you were classical, that "dwr" and the Greek name for water are sister words?

The Jutes, though they shifted the sites of several of the Roman stations—giving up Lymne, for instance, with its Castle of Stutfall, for Hythe—took Dubris just as the last "Count of the Saxon shore" (Roman Admiral defending the south-east coast) had left it.

In Domesday, Godwin's favourite town is said to owe the King twenty ships, each with twenty men, for fifteen days a year. The passage fee for a King's messenger to France was threepence for a horse in winter, twopence in summer, the burghesses finding a pilot and assistant; if more help was wanted it must be paid for.

Foreigners had by no means such good terms. Erasmus (1497) complains bitterly of extortion, and says some Antwerp men, who once took him across, were almost as bad as the English. "As an ape is always an ape, so a sailor is always a sailor," is his verdict; "they steal your baggage, aye,

filch your purse when they get the chance." In his day the fare was still the same; "half a drachma," he calls it.

Hastings — not Roman at all (for Pevensey is the Roman Anderida, with fine remains still of its old castle) — has more of a history than Dover. Hastings the pirate is a myth; the name is from the Hæstingas, a South Saxon clan, conquered with the rest of the South Saxon land by Offa of Mercia. He gave the "gens Hæstingorum" to the Abbey of Saint Denis; and, by-and-by, Æthelstan set up a Royal mint, and collectors can show a whole series of Hastings coins. After the Conquest, Hastings rose to be premier port among the five. Its "barons" took precedence at coronations; its name came first in writs and charters; William built its castle, and gave it to the Count of Eu, on the opposite coast. A necessity of his existence was to keep open communication with the Continent. Hence, a port that just fronted his own Normandy suited him better than Dover. But William could no more stop the sea than Canute could; it washed away the old town, and in Henry the Second's reign Hastings was let off with eighteen ships, Rye and Winchelsea being ordered to make up its quota with an extra ship apiece. A hundred years later it was rated at six, and then sank to five, at which it stood through the rest of the Cinque Port history.

A falling-off this, from the palmy days of the Third Crusade, when, in 1147, Hastings took the lead of the Cinque Port ships, and of Robert Earl of Gloucester's "sea calves" from Southampton, and when a Hastings priest was chosen Bishop of Lisbon as soon as the expedition had wrested that city from the Moors!

There is nothing ancient in Hastings, except the few mouldering castle walls — nothing like the remains at Dover; or the "Wiper's tower" at Rye, built by Stephen's Captain of mercenaries, William of Ypres; or the grand Romanesque churches at Hythe and Romney.

Of all these towns, Sandwich is the quaintest. Its church is fine, with the finest towers in Kent; it has some fine flamboyant windows, and curious clock, with huge pendulum reaching down to the floor. And many of its houses have such an old-fashioned Dutch look. Many, alas, have lately been pulled down. When I was last there a broker's shop was full of blue and white tiles, the fruit of one of these wholesale demolitions.

For a long time Stonor, now a small village, rivalled Sandwich; and both were London's main ports, Stonor being in the tenth century called Londonwick. Both suffered from the Danes, and both were granted to Canterbury — Stonor by Cnut, to Saint Augustine's; Sandwich by Æthelred, to Christ Church.

Richborough is perhaps the finest Roman castle in England; and certainly its position, amid marshes and slow streams where the sail of a lighter comes upon you quite unexpectedly, is not devoid of poetry. But the silt killed Richborough; and though the "Walloon" (Dutch) gave new life to Sandwich, Richborough's successor, the improvement was only temporary. The colony strove hard, by its baize manufacture, to bring back prosperity to the decaying place. In 1565 the houses, which had sunk to two hundred, had more than doubled, a third being built by refugees. Seven years later Elizabeth visited the town, chiefly to arrange about these Dutch settlers. Poor creatures! they had come for liberty, and found strict rule. "They shall have their children baptized according to the order now used here under pain of banishment," says the edict. And their morals were looked after with equal severity. In 1584, "eight notorious drunken Flemings" were banished. As the Queen went through, scaffolds were set up in the streets, hung with black and white baize, and children placed thereon spinning yarn. But baize-making would not scour out the harbour. Richard the Third, who did more good than he gets credit for, had tried and failed. Henry the Eighth promised, and did not perform. Most tantalising of all must have been Protector Somerset's characteristic reply, in the name of poor little Edward: "The Sandwich burgessees have our full liberty to use for their harbour all the proceeds of selling the church furniture in their three parishes." One thinks of the man in Molière's comedy who, when the knavish valet tells him his son is held to ransom by Turks, says: "You know the big trunk up in the cock-loft! Go and take all the old clothes out of it; sell them to the marine-store men, and ransom him with the money."

In Elizabeth's time the silting up got worse, and a deal of extra anti-Popery feeling was roused, thanks to a big Spanish galleon belonging to Pope Paul the Fourth, which ran aground, and could not be got off. Perhaps it was owing to the shallowness of their harbours that the Cinque Port

ships, like the Channel steamers nowadays, were always small. When Richard the First wanted big ships for the voyage to the Holy Land, he got nearly all his fleet from the coast of Anjou, from Southampton, and from the western ports. From the Bayeux tapestry, and from twelfth and thirteenth century seals, we see that the Cinque Port ships were only half-decked boats of from twenty to fifty tons. A fishing-boat, in fact, was turned into a "gent de guerre" (man of war) by rigging up a fore and aft "castle:" a square open box, that is, to shelter the crossbow men. There were no rudders, the steering being managed with two oars worked over the quarter. And, there being neither chart nor compass, we need not wonder that wholesale wrecks were the rule in these shoaly seas. With the fourteenth century the bigger merchant ships began to be used for war. These had a second mast, a long stem answering for bowsprit, and a rudder; but the Cinque Ports kept to the smaller craft, of which, during John's fever of nautical enterprise, the "Premier Port" (Hastings) furnished six, the "two ancient towns," Winchelsea ten, Rye five; while of the "Eastern Ports" Dover supplied twenty-one, and Romney, Hythe, and Sandwich, only five apiece.

The strength of the Dutch element in Sandwich is curiously shown in 1605. Sir W. Monson, who had been driving away some Dutch ships, writes: "Thousands, beholding me from the shore, cursed both me and His Majesty's ships. And no marvel; for most of the inhabitants are either born, bred, or descended from Holland."

Their mark is still seen in the excellent gardening—early broccoli in such cold, low-lying land, for instance. Whether or not they have anything to do with the seed-growing, which is one of the great industries of Romney Marsh, I know not. The seed-harvest is one of the things to be seen, if you are there in the season. So also are Dymchurch wall, which is always "en évidence," and Hubert de Burgh's "Maison Dieu," at Dover. This "Maison Dieu," restored not long ago, was founded by Shakespeare's "Gentle Hubert," as a place where poor soldiers returning from foreign service might have a fortnight's free quarters.

Dover Harbour, by the way, dates from Henry the Eighth. The old harbour was blocked up by the fall of a huge mass of cliffs. Henry built a pier with two round

towers at the ends; yet Dover decayed rapidly; and the spirit which burst out when the Armada came was but an expiring flash.

New Romney had fallen so low that, when Leland "walked" there in Henry the Eighth's time, he reported: "It hath been a netely good haven, insomuch that within men's remembrance ships have come hard up to the town, and cast anchors in one of the churchyards. The sea is now two miles from the town, so sore thereby decayed that, where there were three great parishes and churches, is now scarce one well maintained." Add to this the perpetual expense of keeping open sluices and repairing sea walls, and it is no wonder that in the last century the population sank to five hundred. Thanks to the marsh cattle-fair, it has now again risen to one thousand two hundred. Romney was a great place for the old mystery plays; the Lydd records contain lists of the cost of dresses, scenery, the scribe's labour, and other curious particulars.

Hythe has come out best from the loss of its harbour, because the loss was total. For over two hundred years it has been given up as hopeless; grass has grown on silt and shingle, and the beach has been used for more than thirty years for the Hythe Musketry School. Rye received a large French contingent, chiefly fugitives after Saint Bartholomew's massacre. They were as numerous as the Dutch at Sandwich; and Queen Elizabeth, who called the place "Rye Royal," gave its fishermen the exclusive right of supplying her table. The French strain showed itself all through the long war in systematic smuggling. Of all the ports Winchelsea suffered most from foreign attacks. Founded at first on a sandbank, it was half ruined in 1250, losing three hundred houses. The like happened in 1284; yet the town, undismayed, bearded Prince Edward, holding out desperately for Simon de Montfort. The place was stormed, with great slaughter, for the inhabitants had put back after determining to sail away to France, and having got on shipboard, with wives and children, landing and burning Portsmouth on their way. Edward moved them uphill to the present site of the town, of which he superintended the building, and one day nearly lost his life; his horse "shying" at a windmill, and leaping over the cliff. New Winchelsea was only just finished in time; in 1287, the half-ruined old town was entirely swept away. But

the new one throve no better; the sea, whose advance had ruined its predecessor, ruined it by retreating from its harbour. It pined; and when Elizabeth saw its Mayor and "Barons" (or "jurats") in scarlet robes, like Aldermen, with nothing to lord over but a heap of ruined houses, in her tart way she nicknamed it "Little London."

The chief glory of the Cinque Ports is their connection with the two mediæval Trafalgars of 1216 and 1293. The first was the "battle of the Straits," that is, Hubert de Burgh's victory over Eustace, "the Monk," who, with the help of the Barons, had seized London, taken Hastings, and overrun Kent. John was saved by his fleet, as Charles the First might have been, and James the Second also, had they had a De Burgh or a De Albini to fight for them.

Eustace's first fleet was lost in a storm. The French Queen and Arthur's mother managed to fit him out with another, on board of which was a French army, packed like herrings, under Robert de Courtenay. This was the ruin of the armament.

Hubert, with the Cinque Port fleet, sallied out as Drake did, nearly four centuries later, and, instead of crossing the Frenchman's bows, "luffed" till they were well astern, and then, with the whole force of the wind, bore down on the unprepared enemy. Only fifteen ships escaped; Eustace was at once beheaded as a pirate; many French knights, maddened with the quicklime thrown by the English, leaped overboard. All Dover was looking on; and a grand procession of Bishops and Clergy, who, being "King's men," had taken refuge there since the Barons held the open country, went down to meet the victors.

Before 1293, feelings were much embittered on both sides. French and English could fight and be friends. When Prince Louis heard of the battle of the Straits, he at once made peace and left England. But between Gascons and Normans the case was different: the latter looked on the former as traitors, and, when they took a Gascon ship, would hang the sailors to their yard-arms, hanging a dog between each pair, and sailing in that guise past the Cinque Ports.

Another time, eighty Norman vessels, passing themselves off in the Gironde as wine-ships, began plundering the unsuspecting English, and then attacked the Bayonne and Irish fleet, capturing seventy.

England and France were at peace just then, so the Cinque Ports took the matter into their own hands, challenged the Normans, and, with a fleet of two hundred—Irish, Dutch, and Gascon among them—all with streamers flying, to signify death without quarter, sailed over to St. Mahé, in Brittany, and there, helped by a furious gale, which gave scope for their seamanship, almost annihilated their opponents.

Edward was alarmed at this outbreak in time of peace; but Philip's treachery in seizing the Gascon towns gave him no time to enquire into the matter.

Thirty years after, the Cinque Ports took part in the victory of Sluys, won by placing ships full of archers among those containing knights and heavy armed. It was a great victory; but immediately after it the French ravaged the Kentish sea-board, just as, in 1360, when we should have thought France hopelessly weakened, she swooped down on Winchelsea, sacked and burnt it, and repeated the compliment the very same day next year.

Ten years earlier had been fought the battle of "Lespagnols-sur-mer," off Winchelsea, so well described by Froissart. We can see the little English ships bowling along before the wind against the huge Biscayans; Sir John Chandos singing the last new German "Minnelied," as the minstrels played in the fore-castle; little ten-year-old John of Gaunt listening. He had refused to stay ashore with his mother, though when the battle was won he was in haste to land and ride off with the rest, to show her that her husband and sons were all safe.

Winchelsea was now in her brief prime; the Alards, her chief family, were famous men. Gervase Alard was the first English Admiral of the Fleet. In 1380, the town was once more taken by the French, and so thoroughly ruined, that it never recovered. Not even the capture of the great fleet, fitted out by Charles the Sixth to conquer England—having on board a wooden wall, with lofty towers, all stowed away in pieces ready to be set up as a defence the moment the troops landed, and carrying such a stock of wine that it supplied the English market for two years—could give life to ruined Winchelsea. It was burned once more in 1448, but that was during the War of the Roses. The Cinque Ports were strongly Yorkist; nay, they went so far as to side with Jack Cade, to whose army Hastings furnished a dozen men, while Lydd sent him a porpoise.

There is little else to notice, save the age-long rivalry between the Ports and Yarmouth. Tradition says that Cinque Port fishermen founded the place on a sandbank at the mouth of the Yare—a sort of no-man's land, where they dried their nets, and held a yearly fair. By-and-by, when their hnts had grown into a town, and the town had got a charter, the feud began, and at times was deadly—as in 1297, when at the Swyn, while the King's troops were landing, and under his very eyes, the Cinque Port crews fell on the Yarmouth men, burnt more than twenty of their ships, killing the crews,* only three ships—in one of which, says Walter of Henningburg, was the King's treasure—escaping out to sea. The strangest thing is, that the Ports' men were never punished. Edward published the "Dite" (Edict), by which the East Anglian rights were recognised; but quarrels still went on till Elizabeth's time, when, till 1663, when the fair finally ceased, the Ports' men's "Barons" had a great banquet given them by the Yarmouth "Bailiffs."

A better country for a walking or cycling trip than the line of Cinque Port coast it would be hard to find. Every mile gives some object of interest—old castles, like Saltwood, whence the Archbishops overlooked their subject towns; traces of old harbours, where our navy was nursed through its babyhood; fine churches; Roman antiquities. If you go, enquire at Faversham for Harry Pay, whom the Spaniards called "the pirate Arripay." In 1407, at the head of the Ports' fleet, he took, at one swoop, no less than one hundred and twenty of their merchant ships.

SOME FORMS OF WIT.

Is the Pun a legitimate form of wit? Some people think not; and Dr. Johnson said that a man who would make a pun would pick a pocket. But the fact is, that the general objection to puns is because of their frequent lack of wit—that is to say, it is directed to bad puns. We do not want to discuss bad puns—or even to hear them. The point is, whether good puns are admissible as legitimate and commendable expressions of humour. It is of no use to say, like Sydney Smith, that puns

ought to be in bad repute, and, therefore, they are. As a matter of fact, they are not in bad repute, and although one finds an incorrigible punster—often, it is true, an incorrigible bore—in every little circle of social life, one does not find the race of pickpockets to be increasing alarmingly in numbers. Nor do the statistics of Crime seem to bear any relation to the productions of Planché, of Brough, or of Gilbert, to the spread of burlesque, and the cultivation of Bab-balladist opera.

It is probable that there are few, even in these days of culture, capable of appreciating the profound witticism which De Quincey discovered in the jests for which poor Aelius Lamia was put to death by Domitian; but, on the other hand, the time will probably never come when Porson's pun will not serve to show that, even in gerund-grinding, there may be fun:

When Dido saw Æneas would not come,
She mourned in silence and was Di-do-dum.

Cicero had the reputation of being a great punster, although not many of his witticisms have come down to us. There is one, however, that may be appreciated even without a knowledge of Latin. Once, a Jew attempted to get the cause of Verres into his own hands, and Cicero, who believed the Jew to be a mere tool of the culprit's, opposed him by asking: "What hath a Jew to do with swine's flesh?" The Romans called a boar "verres," so the point was neat and appropriate.

If we want to argue the legitimacy of puns, we are obliged to fall back on the old discussion as to the difference between Wit and Humour. The definitions are legional, of course; but not one of them is wholly satisfactory. "Knowledge comes and wisdom lingers," Tennyson says, and perhaps we might found upon this a parody, with some approach to truth—that wit sparkles and humour permeates. But there is little profit to be got in analyses of this kind. What is funny is not necessarily witty; but what is funny must have in it, or suggested by it, some of the essence of humour. Thus, Charles Lamb was not so far wrong when he said that the most far-fetched and startling puns are the best.

The familiar enquiry, "Is it true that the first apple was eaten by the first pair?" is far-fetched; but one cannot deny the humour of it. Again, in the conundrum, "Why is blindman's buff like sympathy?"—"Because it is a fellow feeling for a fellow-creature," there is a direct application which

* They were not always so successful; in 1356, they went west to attack the Cornish fishers, who would not lower their flag in passing; but the Povey men—thence called "Povey gallants"—fell on them and beat them back.

is also unquestionably humorous. Then, as another example of a pun which is absurdly apparent, there was Douglas Jerrold's remark about a man to whom he had repeatedly written, in vain, for some money.

"I have written him," said Jerrold to an acquaintance, "but got nothing."

"Strange," said the other, "for he is a man full of kindness."

"Yes," rejoined Jerrold, "un-remitting kindness."

A pun which requires explanation in brackets is indeed simply intolerable. The Oxford scholar who, meeting a porter carrying a hare through the streets, asked: "Prithee, friend, is that thy own hare, or a wig?" required no commentator. Nor did Tom Hood, who, when all is said and done, remains the Prince of British punsters. He puns as naturally as he laughs—a babe can see the point of his jokes, and the crustiest Dry-as-dust cannot resist them. It needs no parenthetical aid to evolve the chuckle over Sally Brown's jilted swain, whose

Death, which happened in his berth, at forty odd befell;
They went and told the Sexton, and the Sexton tolled the bell.

Or at Ben Battle, who, at duty's call, left his legs in Badajos's breaches, and who was rejected by faithless Nelly Gray because he couldn't wear his shoes upon his feat of arms. More subtle and more polished is the humour of "To Minerva," one verse of which is inimitable:

My brain is dull, my sight is foul,
I cannot think on what I've read.
Then, Pallas, take away thine owl,
And let us have a lark instead.

Theodore Hook is thought by many to be equal to Hood as a punster; but Hook was laboured and slow in comparison. There is an impromptu air about Hood's puns which is incomparable, and an unexpectedness, even when you are looking for them, that is delicious. Frederick Locker once or twice seemed to have Hood's unconscious ease; as thus:

He cannot be complete in aught,
Who is not humorously prone;
A man without a merry thought,
Can hardly have a funny bone.

John Hill Burton relates a legal joke which, to the legal mind, has all the charm of a pun. One day a bailiff, serving a writ, had been compelled by the defendant to swallow the document. In a state of great agitation and anger, the officer rushed into the court, over which Lord Norbury

was presiding, to complain of the indignity. He was met by the expression of his Lordship's hope that the writ was "not returnable in this court."

Perhaps the non-professional wits—the natural and spontaneous punsters—often say the best things; but then there is not always somebody at hand with the readiness to note the good things and preserve them. In its way, there is nothing better than the answer given by a Cambridge student who, walking with a visitor, was asked, as the Master of Saint John's passed on horseback, "Who is that?" "That is Saint John's head on a charger." Nothing better! Well, yes, we must admit that Napier's despatch, when he had taken Scinde—"Peccavi" (I have sinned)—cannot be beaten; although General de Bourmont's message to the French Minister of War, when the Day of Algiers escaped him, was nearly as good: "Perdidi Diem" (I have lost a Day). Nero, the Roman Emperor, is said to have perpetrated a practical pun. He made Seneca's name condemn him—"Se neca" (kill thyself). The unhappy victim had to commit suicide in order to complete the perfection of the joke. The fun of this strikes one as like that of the boys with the frogs.

There is a very problematic pun ascribed to Sir Francis Drake, who, when he saw the Spanish Fleet spread their sails in flight, is said to have sent to Elizabeth the single word "Cantharides," which, as everybody knows, is "the Spanish fly." But Drake was not a likely man to make a pun at any time, and still less likely to invent so elaborate and yet so simple a one at such a moment.

Bret Harte, by the way, is not usually regarded as a professional wit, and yet among the good things which cling to one's memory is the couplet in the "Heathen Chinee":

Concealed in his nails, which were taper,
What is common in tapers—that's wax.

Somebody has written a parody, in which a candidate for examination even beats the record of the Mongolian:

Concealed in his palms, which were spacious,
What is common in palms—and that's dates.

Speaking of palms recalls the famous pun of the Bishop of Oxford, who, when asked by a lady, why he was nicknamed "Soapy Sam," replied: "Because, madam, I am always getting into hot water, and always coming out with clean hands."

Perhaps, it may be said that some of these examples are not true puns. But a pun

is not necessarily a twisting of spelling, and a contortion of syllables, as the writers of burlesques and "Comic" papers seem to think. It is a play upon words, and to be really entitled to be considered witty, should play both upon the sound and the sense, if possible, but at any rate more upon the sense than the sound. Horace Walpole once said, that the finest pun ever perpetrated was by the Irishman who complained that he had been changed at nurse. So we would say that one of the finest examples of the pun, as a mere play upon sound, was furnished by the man who inscribed a box of tea with the legend "Tu docet" (Thou teachest). Could such a man pick a pocket? It is impossible. But the fact is, that while the puns of the Wit are among the joys of life, the puns of the confirmed punster almost lend an attraction to death.

In conclusion, let us note that the word pun is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "punian," to toss, or throw about. It is this idea which is so finely expressed by Tennyson, when he tells of how Earl Limours when entertaining Geraint, a knight of Arthur's Court, at his table:

Took the word and played upon it,
And made it of two colours; for his talk,
When wine and free companions kindled him,
Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
Of fifty facets.

CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Concessit," etc.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE QUEER EXPERIENCES.

IF living with Mrs. Cray was a "liberal education," I wonder what I ought to call my experience of Dr. Carneggie.

He was the strangest being I ever came across, and I suppose the cleverest. He lived in a queer, rambling house some miles distant from Launceston—a dreary, weird-looking place, for all the world like the picture of a haunted house in the Christmas numbers of the magazines. He had a surgery, and a laboratory, and Heaven knows what all, and almost all his time was spent in what he called "scientific experiments." He kept an old manservant, as queer as, but infinitely more uncouth than, himself. He was a Cornish man, by name of Zeal. Whether that was surname or Christian, I never could make out.

As far as I could judge, the doctor hadn't many patients, nor a very extensive practice. When I had been there about a month, he one day told me to go out in the queer old covered chaise he had, and call on several of them and report the cases to him. I thought it was a very odd thing to do, but I took the list, and set off accordingly.

The first patient I had to see was a Miss Crabapple, an old maid, who lived with a sister, older than herself, at a place called The Wyke, and who was suffering from chronic dyspepsia. I explained to them that my master was unwell, and not able to come out, but being anxious to know how they were—or, rather, how Miss Penelope was—had sent me.

They seemed to think it quite a natural thing to do, so I was soon at ease, and took down all the invalid's symptoms and complaints in a little note-book that Dr. Carneggie had given me. The two old ladies tried to pump me a good deal about my master; but I was careful to know nothing, and I believe they put me down as an enormously stupid person.

The younger Miss Crabapple was a very religious person, and put many strange questions to me about the welfare of my soul, and where I expected to go, and if I lived my life in this world as preparation for another.

I can't say I found that visit very pleasant, and I wondered if she talked like that to the doctor.

I have often wondered why people who have "got religion"—as they express it—are so extremely unpleasant towards those who have not, or who they think have not.

But to return to my patients. After leaving the Miss Crabapples, I had to see one or two farmers' wives and report of them. Then I drove home by the wild, moorland road, thinking what a queer world this is, and how strangely the pattern of human life has varied since the first man and woman accepted their birthright.

When I had had my tea, the doctor sent for me into his study, where he generally sat of an evening with his dog for company. By the way, that dog certainly deserves a description. It was a small, white, silky-haired creature, with the very oddest and most uncanny face I ever saw on an animal. The eyes were enough to haunt one. So big, so soft, so pathetic, and with such a look in them as if she were longing to tell you something, and almost breaking her

heart because you could not understand her.

The doctor called her "Shame;" if one ever heard such a name for a dog! He had the queerest ideas about her. He told me she had a human soul imprisoned in her because of the evil that soul had done in some previous existence. And he also said he was going to find out what the evil was, and who she had been; and I solemnly declare that, when he said it, that dog hung its head and crept away under the couch to hide itself, for all the world as if it knew, and were ashamed of what he might discover.

But this is nothing to the way he used to talk, sometimes making my very blood run cold with terror, and yet it was so interesting and so extraordinary that I could not help listening again and again.

He gave me very different ideas of life and death, I must say. Indeed, death, according to him, was a word without meaning, for he would prove that nothing could die—that is to say, cease to exist; that new forms and new life were ceaselessly springing from the decay we perceived with our earth senses, and that every one and everything lived again, and again, and again, in some shape or other.

"There is an inner world," he would say, "where nature keeps her stores. They are far more wonderful and varied than those which she supplies for more material regions. Could man, as he is now, pierce the veil which separates his world from that other, he would perceive the cause of all things, the beginning of all things, the effect of all things. He would learn, too, that he has to hold himself responsible for his thoughts and actions, and that they and their consequences do not end upon the earth plane he inhabits, but extend into the regions of that other world, and imprint there their ineffaceable records. Nay, more than that—they affected the currents passing ever to and fro in those astral regions, and acted for the welfare or detriment of others to an extent that was almost infinite."

But when he would go on to say that all those impure and wicked thoughts became "beings" in that inner world, as he called it, monsters of evil who peopled space with shapes as hideous and debasing as we picture devils, I grew fairly terrified.

Of course I could not understand half he said, but he liked to have me to listen; and sometimes he would come into the kitchen and talk away to old Zeal and

myself by the hour, and quote Paracelsus, and Hellenbach, and Leibnitz, and other extraordinary men who seemed to me able to prove that everything was nothing, and nothing was everything, and that "I" was not "I," but only thought so; and that the earth wasn't a bit like what it looked, because we thought it looked as it was; whereas the other people in that "inner world" saw it quite differently. That humanity had created its own demons by force of its own tendency to evil; and these demons fastened on it, and preyed upon it, and made it viler and viler, according to the increase of thought that peopled space so recklessly.

I am simply putting this down as I wrote it at the time. No doubt wiser heads than mine can understand what it all means. I am afraid I shall have to be "evoluted" a good many more times before my nature and mind will be capable of taking it in.

He would talk about renunciation till it seemed quite an easy thing, as well as a noble one; of pain that was almost pleasure, strained to one point of endurance; of pleasure that was absolute pain, viewed from another; of a life that seemed objectless, heartless, alone in all, yet living for all in a wider and greater sense than most men comprehend.

But sometimes he would have wild, fierce moods, that terrified me; and then only old Zeal could manage him. And I used to wonder if there was not some dark secret in his life—something that had turned him into the morose, eccentric being he had become.

He seldom spoke well of women, and I often wondered why he had engaged me; but I suppose he had his reasons.

Now and then I heard from Miss Kata. She was going abroad for the winter, she told me; somewhere on the south coast of France. She never mentioned Mr. Treayllion's name, or in any way alluded to that stormy scene when she had given herself up to "memory," as she said, for the last time.

In this quiet place, so far removed from the noise and life of the great world, I heard nothing and learnt nothing of the people whose names had been so familiar to me at Mrs. Cray's. I often wondered about them, about her, about Mr. Treayllion; but I was learning to take life quietly, and wait for events, and I know that if it was destined I should meet or see them again, I should surely do so.

I sometimes thought Dr. Carneggie could not really be quite right in his mind. Perhaps too much study had turned his brain. I shall never forget one night, when he told me that that queer little dog of his had been a girl some two hundred years before, and that he had loved her, and she had been false to him; and now, for her treachery and villainess, she was condemned to take a lower form; but for all that she had the same eyes and the same look; and now, by her fidelity and devotion, she might raise herself in the scale, and next time she came to earth would, in all probability, be a woman again.

Of course I used to listen to him quite gravely; but I often wondered whether an asylum wasn't the fittest place for him; and after Christmas I couldn't stand it any more, but left and went to London again. I didn't know where Miss Kate was; but I had saved enough money to keep me going till I found something else to do.

I went to Mrs. Jefferson's and told her the story of my last place; and she was as kind as ever, and said no doubt her husband would be able to get me a caretaker's place again; and in a week's time he did.

It was a queer little house, and stood in a side street leading out of one of the big West End Squares. It had been empty a long time, and, I heard afterwards, had the reputation of being haunted. But I never knew that, though I must say there were queer noises and sounds all over the place; but I put them down to rats, and slept none the worse for them. I used to work, and read, and write up my Confessions, as I called them, and altogether was very well contented to feel I was my own mistress again.

I had been several weeks in the house, and no one had ever come to look at it in spite of notice-boards and bills on the windows, when, one evening, just near dusk, I heard the bell ring. I went up to the front door, and there stood a small, queer little figure, a girl, as far as size, but with a woman's face, as I saw it in the gas-light—the oddest-looking person, and so queerly dressed!

Her voice was sharp, and had an odd twang about it that I couldn't make out; but as she soon told me she was an American, I put it down to that.

She wanted to see the house, so I took her over it, and she seemed delighted with the dark, odd-shaped rooms and queer nooks and corners, and winding stairs, and I'm sure she talked enough for twenty people. I never heard such a chatterer in my life.

She had such an odd way, too, of peering about; and then she would say something and appear to listen for an answer, with her eyes upraised and her face pale and eager. Then she would turn to me and say:

"‘They’ think it will do,” or “‘they’ say I had better take it,” until at last I began to think she must be demented.

However, it was no business of mine. She had the agent's card, and started off to see him and settle the matter; and I wasn't sorry to see the last of her.

Next day she came again, and the agent with her; and then she told me it was settled. She was going to take the house, and wanted to come in at once. Of course there was the usual question: “Would I clean it and put it in order?” and I agreed to do so, and in a week's time it was quite straight, and the furniture settled.

Not that that was much to boast of. I think it was mostly second-hand, and bad at that.

The little woman—whose name, by the way, was Miss Anatesta Justinia Potts—seemed very excited about her house; but I'm sure a drearier or more tasteless one it would have been hard to find. Dear me, how she used to flit about, for all the world like a restless little bird, and chatter till it made my head ache to listen to her!

I soon found out what she was—a spiritualist. A medium and clairvoyante, so she said, and a great personage in America on account of her psychic gifts. I wondered if she was so much thought of there that she hadn't stayed, because I didn't see what she was going to do in England. However, she told me she knew a great many people, and she sent out cards stating she would be “At Home” on certain evenings and afternoons for “séances” or consultations; and I was so curious and so interested about it all that I accepted her offer to stay on, and take care of the house and manage things generally, for she had no more notion of housekeeping than a baby, and none of her “spiritual” friends seemed able to teach her common-sense.

Sometimes, when she held a “séance,” she used to let me stay in a tiny sort of room, curtained off from what she called her “receiving apartment,” and I must say I was astonished at the things that went on, and more astonished, I think, at the gravity and attention of the sitters. Grave, old, bearded men would come and listen to those raps, and ask questions by the

alphabet, for all the world as if it were of life-and-death importance. Well, perhaps it was—to them. And there would be writing, and playing of musical instruments, and banging of furniture; and, really, I can't describe all that went on.

I suppose it was very wonderful. Only, I was stupid enough to always ask, "What was the good of it?"

They learnt nothing; they never seemed to get on any further. The answers were sometimes very silly, and sometimes all wrong; and it did not seem a very dignified thing for "spirits" to come back to this world for no higher purpose than playing tricks that any conjurer or clown could have done a million times better.

However, they seemed all very happy and delighted; and as for Miss Anatesta Justina, she would go hopping about like a little draggetailed sparrow, and chirping away about "the dear speeruts," as she called them, or "our sweet friends," until I wonder they didn't all laugh at her.

However, there was one thing about the little woman that really was wonderful, and that was her "clairvoyant" faculties.

It was no sham or nonsense—she would just hold a person's hand, and then go off into a sort of trance, and presently begin to speak—not in her own voice, but quite a different one. And then she would tell them everything about themselves—their past, their present, even their future, if they wished.

She never remembered, herself, what she had said. Perhaps that was just as well; for once or twice when I was in the little room, unknown either to her or the sitter, I heard some very queer things indeed—things that I'm sure the enquirer never imagined any other person was aware of. However, I never betrayed any confidence, and I'm not going to relate any of them now, except that special one which seems to belong to the plot of this story, and that, I think, deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XIX. A CRUEL TRUTH.

It was quite dark one winter afternoon when I heard a ring at the bell, and, on answering it, found a lady standing at the door. She was wrapped in a long, fur-lined cloak that quite concealed her figure, and wore a thick, black veil.

"Is Miss Potts at home?" she asked, in a low, hurried voice.

"Yes, madam," I said. "Have you an appointment?"

"N—o," she said, "I came on chance. I—I have heard of her from a friend. If she is disengaged, perhaps she will see me!"

I said I would ask, and showed her into one of the queer little rooms that led out of the hall.

I could not think what it was about her that struck me as familiar—her voice, or her movements—but, despite her disguise, it seemed to me that I had seen her and known her before this afternoon.

Miss Anatesta, as she liked me to call her, said she would see the visitor, so I showed her into the usual "mystic chamber;" but, overpowered by a tormenting curiosity, I slipped into the little inner room which was curtained off from it, and which had a door of exit on to the kitchen stairs.

There was only one lamp burning on the table, and I saw Miss Anatesta rise and survey her visitor with her usual quick, bird-like glance.

"What is it you wish?" she said. "A séance, or to see me?"

"I heard," said the visitor, "that you are a clairvoyante. I—I am anxious to test your powers. I—I have a great wish to know something, and if you could tell me by means of your gift——"

"Why, certainly," said Miss Anatesta, cheerfully. "Nothing in the world easier. Sit down there"—she pointed to a low chair beside the couch—"and, if you've no objection, lift up your veil. I should like to see your eyes, that's all; and I must ask you to hold one of my hands. No, you needn't remove your glove. Ever seen this business before?"

"No," said the lady, in a low, nervous voice, as she raised the thick veil, and threw it back from her face.

I saw it then in the lamplight. I started, and almost cried out. It was Mrs. Cray. She was dressed in mourning; and she looked years older than when I had seen her last—sad, pale, careworn, anything but happy.

Meanwhile Miss Anatesta, after one of her sharp, quick glances, leant back on the cushions of the couch and began to yawn.

"I always begin like that," she said. "They send me to sleep, you know. I shan't be long this evening, I guess."

"They?" echoed Mrs. Cray, as if surprised.

"Yes—my friends—the spirits. I have two guides. One tells me the past, one the future. Which do you want to know?"

"Both," she said, eagerly.

"Well—you mustn't be frightened; for I can't wake up till they let me. So I'll tell you what to do. The first guide will speak to you through me. The second you must question. Do you understand!"

"Yes," she said nervously.

"I'm—I'm going—off," said Miss Anastasia, with another prodigious yawn. "Mind, I shall know nothing of what is said to you. I never recollect when I'm out of trance. Oh—h—h——!"

Another yawn. Her head sank back; her eyes closed. I could see Mrs. Cray's face, white and anxious, watching that curious, little, wizened-up physiognomy. Then quite suddenly Miss Anastasia began to speak. The words ran on like a stream, without break or flaw, and were uttered in a voice quite unlike that of the clairvoyante herself.

"You were married ten years ago. You have no children. Your life has been changeful, erratic, marked by impulses that have swayed you and ruled you far too often. You were not happy in your married life. Your husband did not suit you. He was good, kind; but not sympathetic; not the nature to rule yours. You found this out very soon. Your life had other resources. I see Fame, of a kind. No; I should call it success. Success in some work or occupation you took up. It engrossed you for a time; but you wearied even of that. It is your nature to weary soon of things, as of people. You began to care for another man—to love him as you had never loved before——"

"True enough, Heaven knows!" sobbed the listener, as there came a pause in the flow of words.

"You loved him so passionately that you could not hide it from him; but he—did not love you."

Another pause. I saw how ghastly white her face turned; the quick clenching of the hand that had lain so quiet on her lap. But she said nothing.

"He pretended he did," the merciless voice went on; "but it was partly to save you humiliation and partly to drive away from his own heart and memory the passion he felt for another woman."

There was a silence, brief and portentous. Then came the low, fierce tones of jealousy and fear.

"Who—was that other woman?"

"I—I cannot tell you. I can see him and I can see you; but I cannot find her."

"Go on."

"Your husband died two months ago.

He never knew you had deceived him. Since you heard the news, you have been in hopes that your lover would marry you."

"Tell me for Heaven's sake, if you can, will he marry me?" she panted.

"It is of the future you ask now," came another voice, slow, sonorous, deep, and strangely impressive. "Beware; happy are those who know not, and live in hope and for sake of hope. Better fear and doubt than the certainty of misery foredoomed, and for which you will wait in anguish as the criminal for stroke of the executioner."

"No; I care not. I must know."

"He will not marry you," came the answer, calm and still, and given with an absolute conviction that carried its own weight even to the passionate, rebellious heart that refused to believe.

"Great Heaven!" came in one tortured gasp from the trembling creature's lips. She sank back on the chair, ghastly and trembling. I feared she was going to faint. "Oh, why did I ask—why?" she moaned, and snatched her hand from the "clairvoyante's" grasp, and wrung them wildly together. "But I don't believe it; I can't. He did love me. I know he did."

"You drugged his senses. You made him forget honour, and decency, and self-respect. You tempted and he—yielded; partly because he was a man; chiefly to save you some of the humiliation you merited. He has no regard for you now, only a great weariness, a little pity, and some contempt. He avoids you, does he not?"

"Yes," she muttered, hoarsely. "But I won him once. Surely my power is not quite gone? I can win him back again?"

"You never will," came the stern response. "Of all dead things none is so utterly dead as a passion born of caprice of the senses, loathed and wearied of for its ignoble bondage ere even its first kisses are cold. You have seen it, written it; you know it. Why, then, do you hope to hold this man now he is wearied and cold?"

"I love him," she moaned, as if speaking to herself out of her own misery. "Oh, Heaven! how I love him. More than honour, fame, and life. I have sacrificed so much for him; and now—now——"

"Now he is only proving one of the truths of life. All men are so. You wooed—and he—despised what was too easily won. Had you been wise——"

"Oh," she cried, passionately, "cease. As if one were ever that when one—loves!"

It seems absolute bathos, but, after

those wild words, that storm of grief and humiliation, came another string of—yawns. Miss Anatesta Justinia rubbed her eyes, opened them, received her fee for the interview, and I was summoned to show the veiled figure out of the front door.

She had not once looked at me. I suppose her mind was too full of misery to notice any one, or anything. But I did not envy her as she stepped out into the lighted street and stood for a moment there, looking about her in a blind and helpless way.

Then she hailed a cab, got in, and I heard her give the man the old familiar address in Bruton Street.

I shut the door and went back to my kitchen, and I must confess to feeling a great respect for Miss Anatesta's powers, since I had seen them so satisfactorily proved.

I can't, of course, explain how she did it; but I'm absolutely convinced there was no trick, or sham, about her clairvoyance.

It was a gift, or power of her own, and a very remarkable one. She knew nothing of Mrs. Cray; yet she had told her all this history as if she was reading it off a book.

I was astonished to hear that she was a widow, and I could well imagine what a raging curiosity to know the future at any cost must have brought her to Miss Anatesta. Poor thing! It would have been far better to have remained in ignorance than to suffer the agony she now did.

It seemed to me so foolish, so utterly senseless and irrational. It only shows what fools love can make of people; for, as I said before, Mrs. Cray was a clever woman and a highly-gifted woman, and yet, to think that she could sink to this!

For my part, I would suffer anything in the present sooner than lift the veil that hides the future. Surely, hope is a better gift than any power to see beyond the moment, however sad, however hard it is. I know my queer little mistress herself has often said to me: "Jane, for all that I might know and learn of what is in store for me, I will not ask. Let the future come to me as friend or foe, I care not. If I am to be happy, let the years bring me their gift. If misfortune threatens, let ignorance blind-fold my eyes so that they see not the coming fate. Believe me, there is true wisdom in the words of the man who wrote of life, that its best gift is to hope; its worst to know."

Of course I might supply any amount of stories about the goings on at Miss Anatesta's séances, and clairvoyant sittings. But I suppose they would only interest a very small class of people; and, out of all the records I have kept, I am only selecting those that go to make up my story.

For, indeed, it is very wonderful how just a certain number of people seem entangled in the threads of it for any purpose; and how again and again they came in my way, and played their part on the stage of life where I was audience, until, at last, they made a set of characters and a complete history.

It only shows how small the world is after all, or else that certain people are bound to meet certain people again and again, as if they revolved in a circle. If I had been clever enough to take in all that I heard from the doctor and Miss Anatesta, I might have learnt the true secrets of "cause and effect;" but I confess they got far beyond me, and I used to feel rather dazed when I began to consider myself as an "ego," that had existed for thousands and thousands of years, and learnt that there were such things as Psychic bodies, and Elementals, and astral forms, and faculties that might be developed into almost magical powers for good or for evil. They made out that the construction of the world and the origin of man might be altogether different from what I had learnt in the Bible, or at Sunday School, or from teachers and ministers—in fact, that everything I believed and accepted might be turned topsy-turvy without affording the slightest satisfaction to myself, or the least benefit to those who upset it.

I therefore concluded that in my case "ignorance should be bliss," and refused to hear or understand any of these mysteries. Indeed, I gradually began to get so used to Miss Anatesta's "séances," and trances, and queer talks, that I paid no more attention to them, or to her, than if she had been ordering the dinner, or the breakfast.

I remained with her for six months, and then she took it into her head to start off to America, and sub-let the house to a widower, with a large family, who did not require me, as he had his own servants.

So once more I was on the look-out for employment, and could scarcely flatter myself that I should secure so extraordinary or interesting a place again.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER III. LUCILLE.

KEZIA explained her agitation, on the occasion described in my last chapter, by saying that she had been thinking of "the Mistress," and wishing she could have lived to see Master Randall so happy, and with such a light of gladness in the eyes that were like her own. Kezia always speaks of our mother as "the Mistress," as though there were none other, and never could be. Many an hour of watching had the faithful creature spent with me beside that mother's bed of pain; many precious memories were hers and mine, of words, and looks, and fond imaginings about the son who still, to her, was but the stripling she had parted with in the years that were past.

To the mother, the children never really grow old. To her they are compassed about so closely with all sweet and childish memories that, like a gnarled tree garlanded with climbing plants, they seem ever young and fresh.

So to mother—Randall was always "the boy."

I cried with Kezia, for company, when she told me of these thoughts of hers; but we were careful not to depress Sister Charlotte. Indeed, I trembled for the effect of the excitement that a marriage in the family would bring along with it. But she kept up very well considering; and Lucille, always gentle, though so sprightly, soothed her with pretty, loving ways and words, and bore with her tenderly when she was what Kezia called "a bit tetchy;" indeed we felt, day by day, what a lucky fellow Randall was, and what a bright

and happy prospect lay before him. Poor fellow! he was desperately in love.

Love is, like many other diseases, far more severe in middle life than in youth. All the lonely years that lie in the past seem to gather themselves together and clamour for their share of the present. Long lack of close and tender sympathy makes content the sweeter when it comes.

It was beautiful to me to see the new happiness that had come thus late in the day of life to my brother Randall; and, as to Lucille, Kezia and I thought she grew prettier every day.

But Mrs. McGregor was not alone in the world. Indeed, she was very much otherwise. She had four boys—creatures whom Sister Charlotte and myself could not away with—a fact their doting mother was, I imagine, fully aware of, since she seldom brought them to No. 8, Prospect Place, and was reserved in speaking of them.

But when we paid a visit to the pretty house in the suburbs inhabited by Lucille McGregor, there they were, of course. Never far away from the little, fair-haired mother; often hanging about her in a rough, yet loving fashion, that would have been picturesque if they had been pretty children. Which they were not. Far from it, indeed. Sister Charlotte often said what an ill-favoured one the departed McGregor must have been; and what "objects" the boys were, to be sure!

These dreadful brats were the one drawback to our satisfaction in our brother's marriage. But do you think we dared say so? Not a bit of it! He took to them as a foster-mother to the aliens she has hatched. They were Lucille's; that was enough for him. And Lucille, on her part, took it all as a matter of course. She would tell us, smiling into our faces, that

"the boys" had taken Randall into the Park to feed the ducks, and that his coat-pockets were enormously distended on either side with crusts of bread for that purpose.

At this Sister Charlotte would sniff, and stare through the window, while I turned to some other subject as quickly as possible. But I don't believe Lucille ever so much as noticed our embarrassment.

She was perfectly happy, utterly content. To say the truth, I expect Randall would have had but small chance with her if he had not worshipped at the shrine of those four idols of hers; for we learned later on that he had used all manner of wiles with them from the beginning, and had caused himself to be regarded by them as a species of good angel and purveyor of delights.

It seemed that Kezia had met them—"the crew of them," as she put it—our brother in the midst, and all the boys hanging round, and had drawn her own conclusions, yet felt bound in honour to say nothing to us.

"For better, for wuss, Miss Dacie," said she, when all these things came to be explained—"that's what the Book says; and I reckon them brats is the wuss for Master Randall."

However, the brats, looked upon in the light of a burden, sat lightly upon Randall, and we were happy with a happiness reflected from his.

At last came a morning upon which I had to break a piece of domestic news to Kezia.

"Kezia," I said, solemnly, "I wish you to bake a large plum-cake, ready for next Wednesday. The fact is, Mrs. McGregor is going away for the day to visit some friends, and the Major wishes the four—ahem!—young gentlemen—to come to tea here."

"It's nothing but what I looked for," said Kezia, resignedly. "I'll put all the chinay ornaments i' the big cupboard, and lock 'em up, and I'll make the cake, never fear, Miss Dacie. Will I be puttin' currants or sultanas in that there cake? Happen, too, you'd like a sugar-plum or two stuck a-top, for to give it a countenance, as they say?"

So all went well, and a whole shower of sugar-plums appeared to have fallen on the cake Kezia made, and stuck there—not only white ones, but beautiful pink ones. It was a "thing of beauty and a joy for ever" to the eager eyes of our young guests.

The eldest boy was three years ahead of the others; the rest dreadfully near together, and moved by a common impulse, doing this or that all at the same time, and in exactly the same way.

This leader of the flock, Dumphie by name ("such a name!" as Sister Charlotte remarked), was, as it were, the main-spring of the united action, "Dumphia says this, or Dumphia says that," appearing to carry conviction to one and all. "Dumphia says so," settled all domestic disputes, in the spirit of the old saying, "The King can do no wrong."

They came, in a square of four, walking two and two, in front of a dejected-looking nurse-maid. Dumphia rang the bell. Glenzie, the youngest—Glenarvon McGregor—"What a name!" as Sister Charlotte remarked behind Lucille's back—climbed the steps with difficulty, but sternly refused assistance.

Dumphia went up the steps without help; why then should not he?

Randall was a little late that day, and Sister Charlotte was not quite ready, so the four boys were left in the front parlour by themselves.

That is—with 'Polyanthus, the yellow-crested cockatoo, whom I have omitted from my portrait-gallery of the Prospect Place household.

Polly was an ancient and venerable bird, and somewhat scantily clothed with feathers. On the other hand she was of an almost supernatural intelligence, and looked upon by us in the light of a friend—I had almost said a Christian.

"Polly will keep those creatures amused," Charlotte had said the night before; and apparently, such turned out to be the case, though it may be suggested that the amusement in question was a very one-sided game. When I went into the room there sat the four boys, bright-eyed, large-eared monsters! Dumphia—Dumphia struck me as being quite the ugliest of the four—sat in grave and dignified fashion, surrounded by his satellites on Sister Charlotte's couch, with a long, white tail-feather in his hand by way of sceptre!

Polly, meanwhile, in strong, if not polished language, vituperated from the outside of her cage.

Dumphia, the others listening eagerly, expressed his regret at the state of affairs; but as to the tail-feather, "Polly left it there."

"Polly left it there; Dumphia says so," chorussed the rest.

What could any one do with such children?

I hastily secreted the feather, and only just in time, for Kezia opened the door to usher in Sister Charlotte, arrayed in her best cap and with her best manners on.

Dumphie, I regret to say, was not one whit impressed. He surveyed her, critically, with quiet, observant eyes, and I saw, with annoyance, that Kezia held her apron to the corner of her mouth as she left the room.

I regretted still more to notice that the four boys—gnomes I thought they looked like—kept turning wistful glances to the drawer wherein lurked Polly's tail-feather. They were evidently smarting under a sense of having been defrauded of the goods the gods had provided for their amusement; and I trembled to think what might be the effect upon Sister Charlotte, if she should learn that Polly had suffered a cruel loss.

There sat the gnomes all in a row, alert and gluttonous. Their eyes grew round and eager, as the cake with its crown of sugar-plums appeared. Their ears—what ears they had!—seemed to stand out further and further from their heads. Yet, when Dumphie told us (pathetically) that "poor papa never saw Glennie"—evidently convinced that Providence had dealt hardly with the late Colonel McGregor in this matter—there was something about the boy that constrained Sister Charlotte and myself to feign a sympathy we did not feel.

As I looked at and listened to Lucille's boys I felt that she deserved no little credit for her devotion to them; all unknowing that in a time to come I should have to do bitter mental penance for the thought.

For how could I presage what part a creature like Dumphie should yet play in the drama of our lives; how could I tell that that wide mouth of his was destined to speak words of comfort and of wisdom in my dire extremity; or that I should find strength and consolation in the touch of his hand, in the girdle of his arm?

Presently, Dumphie, with all the dignity of a monarch announcing to his subjects the advent of some foreign potentate, said gravely: "Papa Birt is here," at which the other three rose to their feet—Glennie overturning himself in the excitement of the moment, and having to be reversed by the united action of his entire family, and set upon his feet right under Randall's nose, as he came into the room.

"Hollo, my little chap!" said Randall,

hoisting Glennie—cake and all—on to his shoulder. The rest clustered round my brother's legs, all talking at once.

Sister Charlotte stared out of the window. I lifted the lid, and examined into the state of the teapot.

Randall, in the character of "Papa Birt," was something new to us. Apparently, however, the character sat easily and naturally enough upon him.

Later on, a game of romps took place in the back-parlour, our brother Randall personating a bear of morose and savage disposition.

Then the gnomes departed. Not, however, entirely; for Glennie was, presently, seen climbing the steps with the same defiant, self-reliant demeanour as before, and brazenly demanded the "fevther" that Polly had given them.

That trophy restored to him, he walked proudly down the street, while I congratulated Randall on the fact that Sister Charlotte had retired to her room before the romps set in, and was in blissful ignorance of Polly's maltreatment at the hands of Dumphie.

Randall laughed heartily when I explained the state of affairs to him, and stated his conviction that the boy Dumphie was "a cure."

Well, well! Randall seemed to have found in the four of them a cure in quite another sense; for seldom now did we hear anything of hot fits or cold fits, or the "malaise" that follows the two. As he stood there, wiping his face, heated in that riotous game of romps, I thought he looked the picture of health and happiness, and five years younger, at least, than when he first came home from India.

On the day on which Lucille and he were married, the first shower of leaves fell from the poplar-tree, strewing the garden that had, only the day before, been neat and trim.

"I'm sorry for it, Miss Dacie," said Kezia, when I pointed the coincidence out to her, "it's a sign."

When Kezia said anything was a "sign," no one ever presumed to make any reply. She was a north-country woman, and, as such, an adept in such matters.

As she now spoke, the poplar bowed its plumed head and sobbed and shivered as it shook in the first wind of autumn, and the rain beat sharply on the pane, while the gas-lamp at the entrance of Prospect Place flickered and fluttered in its glass house.

I got a fit of what Sister Charlotte calls the "creeps." In other words, I felt as if some one were pouring cold water down my back.

"Draw the curtains and light the gas, and put a bit of fire in the front parlour," I said to Ketzia.

And she, not without some muttered grumbings as to "putting past the bright front-bar so early in the year," went off to obey my orders.

There is no pleasanter companion than the first fire of autumn. We greet it with all the delight due to a friend from whom we have been long parted. The very shadows that it casts dance and flicker on the walls in noiseless merriment, glad, or so it seems, to come to life again after their summer sleep. Folding back my wedding garment carefully across my knees, to guard against scorching, I sat watching the glint and gleam of the firelight—the shadows dancing round me gaily.

I smiled as I thought of how Dumphie had conducted himself through the day, presenting himself constantly before me as a calm and dignified master of the ceremonies; comforting Glennie, whose tears were always very near the surface, by saying, "Mother will soon come back, and then Papa Birt will be with us always. We shall play bears with him every night," a dazzling prospect which set Glennie off laughing, with the tears still on his eyelashes.

Then, the way in which this dreadful Dumphie had patronised one Cousin Lisabeth, come to take charge of the gnomes until the bride and bridegroom should return from their short honeymoon; the way in which he assured her that they (the gnomes) would "take care of her," and "be good to her," and the way the other gnomes chimed in and said Amen in their own quaint fashion—how droll it all was to think of! . . .

Then there was Randall's happy face—

"There has never been anything so good in all my life before," that was what Randall had said at the very beginning of it all, "never anything so good—never anything so good."

I must have dropped off to sleep saying the words over and over; for when I woke with a start, the fire had died out into blackness, and the leaping shadows were gone.

The poplar-tree sobbed and shivered in the sough of the wind, and the rain beat hard upon the panes as I went up the

narrow stair, reproaching myself for having forgotten Sister Charlotte's night-light, and her last spoonful of soothing-mixture.

But it was pleasant to remember that the morning had been fair and bright, and that a ray of sunshine had lit up Lucille's grey gown into a sort of glory as she walked down the church by her husband's side.

AN ARTIST'S SKETCHES IN CANADA.

PART I. TORONTO AND OTTAWA.

THE notion of making a pleasure trip through Canada in mid-winter seemed to our Bostonian friends so irrational and eccentric, that we said as little about it as possible up to the last minute of starting, and slipped away off by the Fitchburg and Hoosac Tunnel route, to Buffalo, Niagara, and Canada, almost as if we were bound on a criminal errand.

The fact is, we had associated the name Canada with certain characteristic surroundings, just as most people are apt to associate with places, known to them from early childhood simply by name. It seemed as natural to link Canada with sleighs, snow-shoes, and furs, as it seems natural to associate the Mediterranean with calm, unruffled blue; or Italy with golden sunshine, brilliant colours, and picturesque costumes; or Holland with windmill-dotted pastures and rotund, pipe-smoking burghers swathed in many pairs of breeches.

Probably Canada, seen under a summer sun, with very little to distinguish it from any other country at the same season, would have been as disappointing a realisation of a long-cherished ideal, as is the Mediterranean when the "mistral" blows, or Rome, when the snow lies thick on the Palatine Hill; or the Dutchman when found to tend rather to leanness than to the jovial rotundity impressed upon us as his invariable physical characteristic by familiarity with the works of Gerard Douw and Ostade.

No; Canada and winter had to run hand in hand; and no enumeration of discomforts in store for us by well-meaning friends, whose luxurious notions of existence could not associate travelling for pleasure with the smallest sacrifice of personal convenience, could deter us.

Fresh from a tour through the wonderful cities of the States, with their multifold evidences of wealth, refinement, and rest-

less activity—the work, in many instances, of but a few years—we were anxious to see, for ourselves, how the older growths, owning allegiance to the Union Jack, would compare with them.

We came first to Toronto. We had heard Toronto spoken of as the “Chicago of Canada;” we had read about its “magnificent buildings,” and of its beautiful situation on the shore of Lake Ontario; and we had formed a pleasant picture of Toronto. But we were doomed to chilling disappointment.

Perhaps a pleasure traveller, apt to regard matters from a picturesque and artistic point of view, ought to steer clear of essentially business places; or, at any rate, not to expect that his picturesque and artistic hopes will be realised. At any rate, after we had seen the University and the Queen's Park, and had in vain tried to penetrate a fringe of warehouses and freight-cars, in order to get a glimpse of the lake, we felt that we had seen Toronto; and, as nobody could tell us of anything else to be seen, we jumped into the dirtiest and shabbiest horse-car we had yet met with in America, and went with it to its destination. This happened to be the suburb of Sherbourne—a collection of neat villa residences, with no gardens to speak of; very new and very spick and span; but we had been spoilt by Brooklyn, and Brookline, and Longwood.

Perhaps we had no right to form a judgement during a flitting visit of a day; but, although it is well known that Toronto is a very active business centre, there did not seem to be the bustle, and rapid movement, and energetic turmoil of the American business centre about its streets; and we were very much struck with the fifth-rate character of the stores. At any rate, we thought more than we said about Toronto.

He who would know the luxury of railway travelling should make a trip on the Canadian Pacific. The Congressional Express between New York and Washington, and the Chicago Vestibule Train, are splendidly luxurious affairs; but they do not surpass for comfort the express trains of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

On the train by which we travelled to Ottawa from Toronto, there were five sorts of passenger-cars; the parlour and sleeping-car, the dining-car, the smoking-car, the ordinary-car, and the Colonist-car. Even the Colonist-car, an accommodation for emigrants and travellers to the north-west, was a work of art as to its fittings, whilst

the parlour and dining-cars might have passed for the luxuriously decorated and furnished rooms of a good house, and the smoking-car contrasted very favourably with the filthy dens provided on American lines.

The darkie conductor converted our seats into beds by the simple process of letting the slope of the car-roof drop; and by extending the seats themselves, we tumbled into a very much more liberal allowance of space than is granted in the state-rooms of Atlantic liners, and at six o'clock the next morning found ourselves in the little station at Ottawa.

When we stepped on to the platform, we realised for the first time fully the Canada of our imagination. Men, so buried in huge skin coats that they resembled animals, invited us to jump into sleighs. The platform was a sheet of ice; the station-yard was deep in snow; the roofs of Ottawa were glittering with snow; the air was bitterly cold, and yet the brightest of suns shone gladly down from the bluest of skies.

The sights of Ottawa are the Parliament Buildings, and the lumber-yards. Guide-books include the Chaudière Falls; but we were fresh from Niagara, and I am afraid we rather smiled at Ottawa's little cascade. The Parliament Buildings at Ottawa justly rank as second only in grandeur and magnificence on the whole American continent to the Capitol at Washington. Their position is admirably chosen on the summit of a bluff, overlooking on one side the river and the vast stretch of forest-land beyond, and on the other three sides the City and its suburbs.

The policeman on duty who, although the imperial crown shines on his helmet, speaks the most broken of English, informs us that we are at liberty to wander wheresoever we will. So we make a tour of inspection. We visit the beautiful library built in the form of a Chapter House, but, unfortunately, built without due calculation for the natural growth of libraries, so that it is already full. We enter the Senate House, acoustically imperfect, we are told, but very snug-looking with its desks and chairs, and the graceful throne whereon sits Mr. Speaker. We ascend to the Patent Museum, a melancholy mausoleum, wherein the cherished offspring of hundreds of active brains and busy hands—inventions of every conceivable character, from a patent ladies' bustle to a diving-bell—lie packed away in dust and confusion behind

glass doors. We go outside to the Belvedere, whence we enjoy the panorama of backwoods, and lumber-yards, and majestic river, and jumbled house-roofs, until the bitter wind, filling our eyes with tears and savagely nipping our ears, warns us that loitering is not to be indulged in.

From every point of view these Parliament Buildings are worthy of the dignity of the vast power, of which they are the symbol. There is lavish ornament, yet it does not bewilder or confuse, as is too frequently the case with our modern public buildings at home. The symmetry of the grouping of the three blocks of buildings is admirable: there is no crowding and huddling, but ample space and a complete freedom from encroaching neighbours, which bestows on the whole an air of separateness and uniqueness, which seems to fulfil exactly the conditions required. Best quality of all, perhaps, the work has been conscientiously done, and masonry, metal-work, glass-work, and sculpture will bear the minutest examination. During our stay in the States we had seen many splendid Government and municipal piles of buildings—in New York, in Boston, in Philadelphia, and in Washington, amongst others—but we saw nothing which was so entirely satisfactory as the Parliament Buildings of Ottawa.

To leave Ottawa without seeing something of the lumber trade, would be to leave a pleasure half fulfilled.

What we should consider a large timber-yard, would hardly be noticeable along the wharves of the Rideau Canal and the Ottawa River. As far as the eye can stretch is timber of all kinds, of all sizes and shapes. Here, on the water in huge rafts just as it has come down the river for hundreds of miles from the lone lumber-camps of the far North-West, presently to be hauled up an inclined plane into the saw-mills, to reappear in the shape of that clean-cut, fresh-smelling, bright-coloured stack, which is being piled into a railroad car.

Here it is being cut into huge beams and joists; here into delicate laths; here into telegraph-poles. A line of cars on one side is laden with nothing but bark. Another line has for its load nothing but sawdust. The mills are never idle, the timber is always coming and going. And then one can faintly realise the enormous extent of the Canadian forests, although we are surprised to note how much of them still remain for miles, untouched, close to the

great cities; and some idea of the magnitude of the Ottawa lumber trade can be formed from the fact that quite a quarter of the population of the city is engaged in it.

It is in Ottawa that the English visitor is first struck with the apparent anomaly of a people, French not only by descent and in language, but in character, manners, customs, and ideas, who live, work, and enjoy life as loyal subjects of the Queen. There are entire streets in Ottawa, where not only will hardly an inscription in English be seen, but not a word of English be heard. The language, too, is no mere "patois." On the contrary, the French-Canadian gentleman boasts that the French he speaks is that of the old time—of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, of the France uncorrupted by importations of foreign slang and modern "argot." And what we heard certainly confirmed what we had been told. More than half the population are French-Canadians, staunch Roman Catholics, and support their own schools, charities, and religious institutions.

It is a pleasant walk out from Ottawa to the suburb of New Edinburgh, where is Rideau Hall, the residence of the Governor-General. The house stands in extensive grounds—which are open to the public—on the edge of what to our unaccustomed eyes appears to be a dense, impenetrable pine-forest, but which is probably nothing of the kind. We do not know that there is anything particularly exhilarating or cheerful in the position of Rideau Hall, buried in sombre pines, and next door to about as dismal-looking a village as we can call to mind out of China. But we suppose Governor-Generals must not be choosers, and believe that Ottawa, for its size, is, from a social point of view, an exceedingly lively place, whilst the public journals keep us aware of the fact that the Senate House is occasionally more than lively, so that there may be plenty of diversion out of Rideau Hall.

The railway journey from Ottawa to Montreal gives us a very fair notion of the country life of these parts, and to some extent shows us what a genuine forest is. After crossing a long, iron bridge, whence a good view of the Chaudière Falls is obtained, and a second over the Lièvre River, we follow the line of the Ottawa River—a magnificent stream, the banks of which are dotted with saw-mills, and the waters with lumber-rafts. Then we enter the forest region. For mile after

mile the train dashes between two apparently impenetrable masses of pine and fir-trees, broken at intervals by valleys which open up far-reaching vistas of forest-clad hill and dale, with here and there a dairy-farm to remind us that the luxuriance of Nature is only tolerated.

Mighty rivers dash down over rocks and boulders, or break into wild cascades, or twirl along darkly and deeply, fed by innumerable streams which seem to spring from the very roots of the solemn pine-trees clustering to the water's edge.

Then there is a break in the procession of dark green branches and black trunks past the car-window; for half an hour we speed by a desolate expanse of snow-covered ground, out of which the charred stumps of fallen forest monarchs start in all sorts of eccentric shapes, and we faintly realise the terrible significance of a forest fire.

We pass villages with quaint names—L'Ange Gardien, Papineauville, Lachute, and a long list of Saints—so redolent of the old France so many hundreds of miles away, that it is hard to realise that we are in the New World. These settlements have a wonderful family likeness. There is generally the main road coming straight up to the railroad track, with its sentinel warning-post, of a Saint Andrew's Cross shape, painted white, and inscribed with the words, "Railroad Crossing," or "Look out for the Engine." There is the scattered assemblage of heavy-eaved houses with dormer windows in the roof, verandahs and green-painted persiennes, the house door being on the level with the first floor, and communicating with the street by a long flight of steps—an arrangement which speaks of the winter days when the snow lies six feet deep. There is the little church with its glittering dome or spire, and its God's Acre filled with the wooden memorial crosses so familiar in the graveyards of old France. There is actually a "Hôtel de la Gare," or an "Estaminet," in most villages; and the strange picture of Old France, living and flourishing in the Far West, is rendered complete by the universal prevalence of the French language.

The chattering amongst the loungers on the station platforms is in French. Our conductor argues volubly in French with the passenger who has entered without a ticket, and we half expect him to shout out "En Route! Allez!" instead of the stereotyped "All aboard!" Indeed, at one

point of the journey, we are the only passengers, in a car full of people, who are speaking English—the nearest approach to it being the conversation of two bearded men, which is in the broadest Scottish.

Nor are the personal characteristics of the passengers less striking. Rugged, weather-beaten faces, and strongly-built figures they have, which testify to a hard life in a hard climate. And, in truth, it must oftentimes be a hard life! After a seemingly endless succession of forest, we pass a solitary homestead situated on a patch, a mere clearing in the heart of the trees. We speed on for miles, and see no other sign of human life, and we try to realise what the life-struggle in that little house during the long, snow-bound winter months must be.

No doubt our neighbour in the fur-coat, with the dark, deep-furrowed face, half hidden in the rough beard, could enlighten us. No white-handed clerks, or smug citizens, form part of our travelling community. The smoking-car is full; but the smoke which fills it is that of pipes and not of cigars, and over the frontier one may travel for weeks without even seeing a pipe. Even the better-dressed men, who have good valises, and wear jewellery, are rough-booted and rough-hatted, as if this land of fighting with nature were no sphere for the costume of the fashionable street.

Gradually the wild character of the country changes. Houses become more frequent, and the forest becomes more broken up. We dash through St. Rose, a charming French village much resorted to by Montreal people in summer time, and the constant clanging of our bell—diversified by the hoarse shriek of our whistle as we cross high-roads—together with the appearance of long lines of huge freight-cars belonging to railroad companies in all parts of the Eastern States, notably refrigerator-cars connected with the Chicago meat industry, prepare us for the end of our journey, and finally we pull up in the dépôt of Montreal.

AN OLD DOCKYARD.

A PATRIARCH amongst railways is the old line to Greenwich, that was one of the earliest of its kind, and an object of wonder, and even dismay, to the old-fashioned people of other days. Like other patriarchs, our railway has seen itself almost driven out of remembrance by mightier descend-

ants; but, to those who remember it of old times, there is a pathetic touch about the remaining features of a scene where so much has been changed. Pleasant is a glimpse of the Tower over the house-tops; the gilded flame of the Monument; the masts and rigging showing among the chimney-pots; and the wreathing steam from wharf and workshop. Even the chimney pots are pleasant to see, and the old red-ridge tiles; the church spires, too, one in the shape of a fluted column, tapering gracefully toward a gilded weather-cock; and there is another spire, with a gilded dragon at the top, a dragon that seems to threaten a fiery flight towards the City, as it gleams in the wintry sunshine. Then there are the tan-pits of Bermondsey, with the crowded dwellings thereabouts, differing so widely from the ancient associations of the place; the cloistered Abbey, with its secluded grounds, where crowned heads might once seek rest and retirement.

The sight of "Spa Road" suggests another set of associations of green fields and tea-gardens; and Bermondsey Spa, with its pump-house; and of the citizens in wigs and cocked hats, and the dames in hooped petticoats, who might have drunk the waters here long ago. Even the gala nights at the Wells, the fireworks, music, and dances, might have been remembered by some of those who first travelled on this old Greenwich railway, although not the faintest echo of such gaieties lingers about the sombre quarter.

When Bermondsey is passed, there appears a patch or two of cultivated ground, surrounded and cut up by railway lines, but still a morsel of the open fields and gardens that once formed the outer fringe of London hereabouts. There is nothing else to divide the streets of London from the streets of Deptford but this little strip of ground, which you might cross with a hop, skip, and jump. It is just a tattered end of the country, and you might trace it, field after field, widening and stretching out till cornfields were reached, and woods, and open downs, far away in that distance which is hidden by the murky haze.

With Deptford we have rows of small tenements back to back, some old and brown, others new and yellow, and radiating in regular lines, like the wards of a modern prison. But where the cottages are old, their back-yards still hang out signs of former seafaring habits. Here are flagstaves, like masts, hung with yards

and rigging; here are weather-vanes pointing in all directions; here are pigeon-cotes and hutchies made of old ships' timbers, and a bit of a summer-house here and there, in the form of a battered old boat stuck on end. Soon there is a glimpse of a canal, with barges lying here and there, and wharves strewn with casks of all kinds, oil, and tar, and tallow; and then appear tall buildings, with a gleam of turbid waters in the openings, and then you are fairly landed at Deptford Station.

Something of originality still clings to the old station of this patriarchal railway. It was built when railway-stations afforded scope for the imagination. And here is a structure like a temple, or the pump-house of some ancient Spa, black and battered, with the stucco peeling off its peristyle, and a winding staircase within, the descent of which causes all sense of topographical bearings to be for the moment obscured. A jumble of streets leading anywhere and nowhere, with a perfume of fried fish and rancid oil pervading the whole—such is the impression that first strikes a casual observer. But out of the maze rises the composite tower of St. Paul's, in no way resembling its mighty namesake in the City, but surrounded with a wide-stretching graveyard, thickly crowded with white headstones, with here and there some more ambitious monument of one whose estate was ampler than the common.

The churchyard is open all day long, and affords a convenient, well-frequented passage towards river-side Deptford. Here, as you pass along where the turf shows a pale green, among the many graves you may find a reminder of Deptford's seafaring connection. Here rests some ship's captain safe in port. There, sorrowing friends have raised a memorial of one whose bones lie fathoms deep, far away under the blue sea. Sorrowing friends have been sorrowed for in their turn, and sleep under the same memorial stone. Under the church tower once opened the gates of a great vaulted storehouse of the dead; and florid monuments in the church itself raise a moment's curiosity as to the history of some forgotten worthy.

And St. Paul's gives a point of departure. For in an old print—a bird's-eye view of Deptford, with its famous Dockyard, and of the river, with His Majesty's Royal navy there displayed—"the new church" is conspicuous at one end of the picture, while the "old church" shows more modestly on the other flank. The "new

church" is St. Paul's, which was new then; while there away rises the old church tower, that of St. Nicholas, worn and weathered by the storms and frosts of centuries, grim and sad in its present appearance, with a patched and weather-beaten church attached, but hardly seeming to belong to it, partly of stone, and partly of brick—ugly, yet quaint, but above all, forlorn and desolate-looking, with rusty iron gates looking upon damp and discoloured tombstones, and surrounded by dim and dingy dwellings of a doubtful and seamy way of life.

And yet this dismal old church has a record which connects it with the first beginning of the English navy. Just as Stepney, on the other side of the river, is popularly reputed to be the mother church of all those born at sea, so may Saint Nicholas, Deptford, be called the parish church of the British Tar; of those who fought, and conquered, and fell in the naval wars of the last three centuries, whether against the Spaniards in the New World and the Old, under the great captains of Elizabeth's age; or against the Dutch, or the French in succeeding centuries down to the days of Nelson of the Nile, and Duncan of Camperdown. Here were buried, too, many of the gallant sea captains of other days; their monuments still existing, or their names to be traced in the old church registers. Great Admirals and Commanders lodged in Deptford town, and came to worship in old Saint Nicholas Church, in all the pomp of full-blown periwigs, cocked hats, and gold lace. Here, too, came the worshipful chief officers of the Royal Dockyard, the master-shipwrights, the master-surveyors, and master-attendants, in as much ceremony and dignity as the very Admirals—with many a man-of-war captain, as well as the gallant tars, who had climbed on board through the hause-hole, as the saying was, and won their rank by hard and desperate service.

Of the former class, doubtless, was one Captain George Shelvocke, whose monument describes his career. Bred to the sea under the famous Admiral Benbow, himself one of the hause-pipe heroes, our Captain served on board the Royal Navy during the wars of King William and Queen Anne. In the years 1719 to 1722 he made a voyage round the world, which he most wonderfully, and to the great loss of the Spaniards, completed, though in the midst of it he was shipwrecked upon the island of Juan Fernandez

Whether he came upon traces of Alexander Selkirk on that island, the monumental record does not show. But he came to end his days in peace and honour at Deptford, and died there, and was buried in Saint Nicholas Church in 1742.

The reverse of the shield is shown in an extract from the church register given by Lysons, in his "Envyrons of London": "Captain Thomas Pearce and Lieutenant Logan shot to death for losing the 'Sapphire' cowardly, buried August twenty-sixth, 1676." But this was at a time when the character of our naval service was at its lowest ebb, and, perhaps, these unhappy victims were sacrificed to shield the misconduct and incapacity of more distinguished offenders. In contrast again to this melancholy record, we have the notice of a trading captain, who brought his ship safely in after beating off a French privateer, but who died of his wounds soon after.

And again, bringing to mind the infancy of the British navy, we have monuments to the Petts, several of whom are mentioned by Samuel Pepys in his diary. Even then the Petts had been Royal shipwrights and naval constructors for generations. An ancestor had, doubtless, helped to build that noble ship, the "Harry Grace à Dieu;" the progress of which bluff King Harry may have watched from the window of his Royal Palace of Greenwich. A Peter Pett was shipwright to Harry's daughters, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, and helped to fit out the fleet that fought the Spanish Armada; and his son, or grandson, Phineas, was in high favour with the new Stuart dynasty, and fitted out the fleet on all ceremonial occasions when Royal personages had to be conveyed across the seas. In 1637, the same Phineas built the "Sovereign of the Seas" for his Royal master, the largest vessel, it was said, that had been constructed since the "Ark." Anyhow, she was a monstrous war-ship for the times; one hundred and twenty-eight feet long and forty-eight feet broad, and of one thousand six hundred and thirty-seven tons burthen. A later Peter was the first to build a frigate, a faster and more lightly-armed war-ship, of which the name, if not the model, was borrowed from the Venetian navy. Commissioner Pett is mentioned by Pepys as busy at Deptford over the building of a Royal yacht, which was destined to eclipse anything that the Dutchman could build in that way.

And now the monumental record of old Saint Nicholas takes us in another direction. Here in the dignity of coats-of-arms and escutcheons are commemorated sundry of the family of Browne—a name of some literary interest in connection with that of Evelyn of Sayes Court. The Brownes were of the new and courtly kind of gentry; the first to make any mark having been taken up by the proud and magnificent Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth's favourite, and the husband of Amy Robsart. Through the influence of the great Earl, Browne was placed at Court, became clerk of the Green Cloth, gentleman of the Privy Chamber, clerk of the Privy Council. His descendants served the ensuing monarchs with credit and appreciation; the last shown not in salaries—which were but small, and often not paid at all, ready money being scarce at Court—but in grants of perquisites, and patents, and, more grateful still, of Crown lands here and there. And finding King Charles in a good humour one day, Sir Richard Browne got the promise of a parcel of lands lying about his house at Deptford, which he and his father before him had held under a Crown lease. This old house, with its walled gardens, fish-ponds, and great holly hedge, had once belonged to the family of De Sayes, Lords of the Manor of Deptford, and hence was known as Sayes Court—a pleasant river-side dwelling in those days where the Brownes had built and planted, and which presently came to John Evelyn, of "Silva" and the "Diary," who had married Browne's only child and heiress.

There are monuments to sundry of the Evelyns, too, in the old church of Saint Nicholas; and we may come across the name again in rambling about Deptford.

But now to leave these monuments of the dead and to see what existing relics there are of this famous old dockyard close by, which may justly be called the nursery of the English navy. On the way we may notice some old almshouses, which are said to belong to the Corporation of Trinity House, and which were founded for the benefit of decayed pilots, masters of ships, and the like; and these bring to mind the claims of Deptford to be the mother parish also of those brethren, elder or younger, of that famous guild. And thus we are reminded of buoys and sea marks, whether in tideways or off shoals and sandbanks; of lighthouses shedding their cheerful beams far over the wild seas; of bluff and ruddy light-ships, riding out storms

and tempest; of every mark and warning for mariners, indeed, all round our stormy British waters, for all these hang to the Trinity House, of which the fount and origin is to be found at Deptford.

Originally, the corporation—or guild, rather, as in its original constitution, a guild of pilots and master mariners—was founded by one Thomas Spert, Comptroller of the Navy to King Henry the Eighth, and its title was the "Guild, or Fraternity of the Most Glorious Trinity, and of Deptford Strond, with Masters, Wardens, and Assistants." And here its courts were held, in an old hall pulled down a century ago. And from this beginning it has gone on increasing in influence and power, till now, from the house on Tower Hill, is directed the whole buoyage, beaconage, and pilotage of our coasts.

Well, here the streets slope down to the river, and hereabouts should be the site of the once famous Deptford Dockyard; and here, to all appearance, it still actually exists. Here is the entrance lodge, with its pillars and snug Governmental appearance, where you might expect to see a row of stalwart policemen of the A division vigorously scrutinising and challenging all who enter or go out. The policemen are there, but they do not oppose our progress. Here we may wander at will along these vacant, silent side-walks. The great covered building-slips seem to be still in position; and here is the snug little enclosure where are the official residences of the chiefs of the yard—houses of a pleasant Queen Anne aspect of neatness and propriety. And there are the red brick store-houses, with the turret clock above, on the river frontage, such as we see in the old prints of the dockyards, and these, they say, date originally from the days of Henry the Eighth, when the Yard was first established. There is a pleasant nook, too, of garden and greensward, with a glimpse of the river flashing by, and the big steamers wallowing in the tide, and barges drifting about, and huge cranes and derricks lolling idly over the river-bank.

Keen is the wintry wind that sweeps over the deserted courtyards and howls among the great timber structures; and the pale sunshine that breaks over the wide expanse of solitude only adds to its desolation. Where be the great anchors, the mighty chains, the coils of cable; where the piles of masts and spars; where the planks and timbers; where the shipwrights with saws and hammers, and the

riggers with their hempen labyrinths! Everywhere is emptiness and silence, except that from out the depths of one of these great sheds—which might hide the skeleton of one of the old three-deckers—there comes the melancholy low of a solitary ox and the feeble bleating of sheep.

Yes, our Dockyard has suffered a sad sea change. It is called the Foreign Cattle Market now. And at times it may be lively enough with a ghastly kind of liveliness. A cattle-boat may bring its consignment of foreign herds; carcase dealers may hurry down from their stalls; slaughterers may sharpen their knives for the coming holocaust. That line of freely-ventilated storehouses—where once were stored the hemp, the blocks, the tackle, the fragrant tar, the canvas that was to give wings to the great solid fighting-ships—is now a row of slaughter-houses.

It is a necessary and useful institution, no doubt, this Foreign Cattle Market; and yet the thought that every living animal that lands here, after the purgatory of its troubled sea voyage, is doomed to immediate slaughter, grates unpleasantly on the feelings. It is not quite the same at an ordinary cattle market, for there is, perhaps, a loophole for escape. The particular beast that strikes the eye may, after all, escape the butcher's knife. But here, all who enter here leave hope behind. So that it is not very distressing to find that the importation of live cattle has rapidly fallen off, and that, possibly, sooner or later, there may be no necessity for a foreign cattle market, the importation of dead meat proving a much more economical and profitable process.

So that, after all, it is quite possible that a more glorious destiny may be in store for the old Dockyard, with its fine old memories of tarry hands and hearts of oak. And in that hope and persuasion let us find heart of grace to suggest a few reminiscences of its ancient state.

We may begin with Harry the Eighth, and that famous ship his namesake, and we may end in the days of illustrated newspapers and the infancy of a steam-propelled navy; and in all the time between, we shall find Deptford at work upon the wooden walls of old England.

A famous day it was for Deptford when, with the tide, came sailing up the "Golden Hind," with Francis Drake on board, fresh from his adventurous voyage round the world, and with golden prizes

on board, snatched from the haughty Spaniard. Soon, at the news, came Queen Elizabeth in her Royal barge, to board the famous ship, and to dine with the Captain in his cabin, to congratulate him as her valorous and faithful knight, and laying a sword across his shoulders, bid him "rise Sir Francis." The "Golden Hind," her service over, was laid up in honourable retirement in Deptford Yard, just as we honour Nelson's "Victory" at Portsmouth. Wits, and men of fashion from town, made up parties to visit Deptford and dine on board her. But she grew old and crazy, as ships will do; and a generation arose that recked little of Drake and his bold deeds, and so the old ship was at last broken up for firewood.

Pepys gives us many a glimpse of Deptford, his first visit being the most detailed when he travelled with Major Slingsby and Major Waters, the latter "a deaf and most amorous, melancholy gentleman," whose disappointments in love have made him but indifferent company. They took the water to Redriffe or Rotherhithe, and so on foot to Deptford, a pleasanter walk then, no doubt, than at present, with the river-banks all open, and the pleasant panorama of the gay river traffic passing before their eyes. In the Dockyard he "saw for the first time the great authority" of his place, the "captains of the fleet coming, cap in hand," to pay their respects to him. He was lodged, too, by the store-keeper "with so much respect and honour" that the modest man was quite abashed, and knew not what countenance to put upon it all. But next night there was an alarm, as of an attack upon the Yard. The officials rushed out, the seamen from the ships were hurried ashore, and armed with handspikes, "as fierce as could be." But it is all a drunken disturbance, caused by passing roisterers, and all is quiet again.

All next morning he brisked up and down the Yard noting this and that, and watching the seamen exercise, "which they do already very handsomely." And there was the King's yacht to be seen, and Commissioner Pett, who was busy about it; with the great rope-yards and the making of ship's cables. And then Pepys and his friends take barge to Blackwall, and so by Dock Shore, which is Wapping, no doubt, to the Navy Office in Sything Lane.

Sometimes, too, he met his friend Evelyn, about whom shrewd Pepys, at first ac-

quaintance, queried whether he was quite as wise as he thought himself. Sometimes there was question of paying off ships in the Yard. Or again, there was talk with Sir Nicholas Crispe, who was a marvellous projector, and who proposed to make a great sasse, or harbour, in the King's lands about Deptford, a dock that shall hold two hundred sail of the highest tonnage. But Pepys remembered that the land round about was no longer the King's, but Sir Richard Browne's; and nothing more was heard of the great project, a foreshadowing of the docks to be excavated in the present age.

From Pepys, Captain Shelvocke may take the record with his voyage round the world which, like Francis Drake's, was finished at Deptford Yard; and that may almost bring us to the beginning of Arctic explorations, of which the once famous expeditions of Captain Rosse were surely fitted out from Deptford Yard. The Yard was in full work, too, when Lysons wrote, about 1796, with the French war on hand, and the "Neptune," of ninety-eight guns, on the stocks at Deptford. And we may picture the flags at half-mast high, and the King's ships in the Reach, firing solemn minute-guns as a flotilla, draped in black, set forth from Greenwich Stairs, with Nelson's body on board, to be conveyed to Whitehall.

And hereabouts some old-fashioned prints may come in with views of Deptford Reach, and the fleet lying there at anchor, while guns thunder out salutes, barges flash to and fro, with post-captains and Admirals on board, and all the stir and animation of a naval display. Or we have a frigate, taking in her masts, alongside the sheer-hulk, which Dibdin may have had in his mind; with many another scene of dockyard incidents.

And, lastly, we may hunt out, in a file of the "Illustrated News," a woodcut of the launch of Her Majesty's ship, "Worcester," at Deptford. There was no hurry in shipbuilding in those days; and so we read of the "Worcester" that she was begun as to her frame in 1816, her keel laid in 1819, since when, till this year of grace, 1849, she had been gradually advancing to completion. And a jolly, round, bluff, comfortable-looking ship she is, with a splendid captain's cabin, judging from the bow windows, which her position on the slips displays to advantage. Even then she would not have been hurried into the water, only that her slip was required

for a first-rate war-steamer of the largest calibre ever built, to be called the "Terrible." However, it was a capital launch, and attracted thousands of spectators, all the river-banks being lined with them, with steamers and boats on the water all crammed with sightseers. We don't get such gratis sights in the penny steamers nowadays. But whether the "Worcester," which had a formidable armament of fifty thirty-two pounders, ever performed any doughty deeds of war, is more than we can say, although she still pursues a useful career as a training-ship.

And it is not so many years ago that the "Dreadnought" was broken up—that fine old three-decker of a hospital ship, that had captured a Frenchman at Trafalgar. Before the "Dreadnought," the "Grampus" had the same berth just off Deptford, for the same benign purpose. And there were prison ships before then—sad and dismal-looking hulks, from which strange cries and disconsolate hails would be heard by passing vessels.

And now the Dockyard is left behind, and naval matters driven out of remembrance, as we stumble upon Evelyn Street, and presently upon Sayes Court itself. Not the old house, indeed, nor the gardens, nor the great holly-hedge of which John Evelyn writes so enthusiastically:

"Is there, under heaven, a more glorious and refreshing object of the kind than an impregnable hedge, of about four hundred feet in length, nine feet high, and five feet in diameter, and which I can show in my now ruined garden at Sayes Court—thanks to the Czar of Muscovy—glittering with its armed and varnished leaves?"

Was it through this famous hedge that the Czar Peter amused himself by being trundled in a wheelbarrow? Perhaps it was some other part of the garden that he thus devastated; but it is in evidence that he ruined John Evelyn's garden, and made the house almost uninhabitable after him—a tipsy, dissipated little boor, who was working hard as a shipwright, in Deptford Dockyard, that he might teach his people at home to build ships in their turn.

But, alas! there is not an atom left of all Sayes Court, and what we see is but an open space laid out as a recreation-ground, with a hall for public meetings and a small museum, which an Evelyn of the present day has established for the benefit of the people of Deptford.

DAFFODILS.

I SANG of these bright flowers, you know,
When I was young, long years ago,
And how you praised the song!
Then softly stroked my hair a-down,
And whispered of the poet's crown
That should be mine ere long.

I sang to please you, as the flowers
Were pulled to grace your birthday hours,
That came with coming spring:
I was so happy, for your love
Filled earth below and heaven above—
I could not choose but sing.

I was so happy; and to-day,
Though God hath parted far away
Your unknown life from mine,
A sense of peace my bosom fills;
And lo! I bring fair daffodils,
Beloved, for a sign.

A sign of love that tires not yet,
That would not, if it could, forget;
Of love by love made brave:
For I can bear your flowers to bring,
And bear to hear the thrushes sing,
Here, by your quiet grave.

And I can bear to turn away,
To leave you sleeping day by day,
What time my task goes on;
The task I shared with you so long,
The work for which love makes me strong,
Though all its joy be gone!

Oh! vanished far from sight and touch,
My heart leaned on your heart too much,
As by your side I crept;
My head was sheltered by your breast,
You toiled and thought while I took rest,
You wakened while I slept.

The way was long, the world was hard,
All fortune's gates were golden-barred,
Alas! we had no key;
God closed in love those tired eyes,
Death gave life's work its crown and prize,
And parted you and me!

Awhile—ah, work-mate, not for long!—
I sing my simple, saddened song,
And learn my lesson plain.
I, yearly, bring your daffodils,
Till far beyond the eternal hills
We meet—nor part again!

which bound the view on all sides. One narrow, deep-banked lane, and a forest-path, which degenerates to mere guess-work among the labyrinthine water-courses of the marsh, are the only approaches to Buckler's Hard, and they can scarcely be called communications with the outer world.

Yet Buckler's Hard has, or rather has had, its *raison d'être*. Tradition gives out that an enterprising ancestor of the great man, who, in that remote corner of the Forest, is monarch of all he surveys, and rather more, once had a fancy to build ships on his estate of home-grown materials; and that at a conveniently deep place on Bewley Water, within a few miles of the Solent, he set up a ship-yard, and built these red-brick cottages for his shipwrights, and the more imposing edifice near the water for the overseer.

But ship-building at Buckler's Hard had long since become a thing of the past, at the time of my story; the carpenters, joiners, blacksmiths, caulkers, and all the other craftsmen had vanished; their record had faded even from the most patriarchal memory of the place, and the hamlet had become, as such outlying hamlets have the knack of becoming, a sort of black sheep-fold for the less creditable characters of the neighbouring villages of Bewley and Fawley. It had given occasional trouble to the coast-guardsmen down the water, and it was a constant thorn in the side of his lordship's keepers; indeed, the loose notions of its inhabitants with regard to his lordship's game gave the chief justification for the existence and maintenance of a certain terrible canine monster, known to the villagers as the man-dog—not from any unnatural resemblance to the human race, but because he had been bred and trained to track and bring down human game in the shape of hardened and inveterate poachers and trespassers.

Buckler's Hard, you see, was no place for a respectable man to choose to settle in; and when Mr. Eustace Lemaitre took the overseer's house, which had long stood empty, and came to live there with his son Jean-Jacques, and his daughter Lois, his choice of a dwelling gave anything but a favourable impression of his character to the strangers among whom he had come to settle. It was unanimously voted by every one who had the smallest right to a voice in the matter, that there must be something queer about the man; yet the most diligent curiosity could attain him with

THE DAY THAT WAS COMING.

A COMPLETE STORY.

THE hamlet of Buckler's Hard, consisting of two short rows of red-brick cottages, and one more imposing edifice, which stood facing one another across a broad green-sward, lies on the sloping banks of Bewley Water in the New Forest, as if it had been carelessly dropped down there by some freak of Fate, and completely forgotten. It is as secluded as a human settlement well can be; to the right and left, as one stands between the houses and the shore, the broad, shallow, tidal river, and the flowery marshes beside it, curve out of sight between low, wooded hills,

nothing more definite than that he was a Frenchman; that he spoke broken English, which was hard to understand; that he had much difficulty in catching the meaning of those who expressed themselves in the slow, broad tongue of southern England; and that he farmed the few acres of ground he had rented from his lordship in a manner as incomprehensible to his neighbours as was the lingo in which he soliloquised with many gesticulations, while he walked about in a curious hat and capacious nether garments, the like of which had never been fashionable on the banks of Bewley Water.

Jean-Jacques was a far more objectively suspicious character than his father, whose agricultural innovations and vehement monologues were plain sailing compared to the mysterious occupation which kept the son a close prisoner, in an upper chamber, six days out of seven, and dyed his fingertips a deep sable black. Sometimes it was surmised that he was a shoemaker; but, if so, whose shoes did he make?

"They would like to know all about it—where we came from, why we came, and the rest," Monsieur Lemaitre would say sometimes, as he sat with his children; "but why should we tell them what they could not understand? The exile, the ostracised patriot, must keep his own secret. We are quiet here, quiet and unmolested. While it is so with us, we can do much that needs to be done to prepare for the great day that is coming; while we sit secluded and unnoticed, our voice may go out through all the earth, and our words to the end of the world. I am a farmer. I till the soil which belongs to the great Father of us all. It is true that until the day comes when the valleys shall be exalted and the hills brought low, his lordship of Bewley will claim these acres that I cultivate as his perquisite of creation. But, if I am only what these people call a tenant-farmer, as I walk about my fields I can think great, burning thoughts, whose breath floats over my crops, leaving them unscathed, to ignite the tares which are ready for the fire and the chaff which cumbers the threshing-floor. Thou, Jean-Jacques, as every one sees, art an odd fellow, who likes to potter with a little machine and blacken his fingers with a dirty mess which does not easily wash off; but if thy wheels are to form part of the great machinery of human progress; if thy black compound is to make on men's minds, marks which fire and blood will

hardly purge away; we must make no outcry, no confidences. These forest folk do not exclaim when the acorn falls and the oak springs. It is a waiting game; but the patient will win their crown in the day that is coming."

Jean-Jacques was more reserved than his father; but after one of these harangues he would pace the room, delivering himself of fiery verses of Victor Hugo's, till his sister felt the tears rising from her heart to her eyes, with wild contagious hope for, and joy in, this great day that was to come.

Lois was much younger than her brother. She could scarcely have been called a woman, if trouble and experience had not added weight to her eighteen years. In her native land, or in any place where prejudice was less strong than it was at Buckler's Hard, she would have been called beautiful; but there, her fine, noble face, her tall, graceful figure, her air of distinction, were no claim to popularity, nay, were rather so many overwhelming proofs that she was a stranger and an alien.

The good folk of Bewley and Buckler's Hard did not consider Lois Lemaitre more of a stranger than she was ready to acknowledge herself to be; though, as far as she was concerned, she would rather have felt at home among them. She often wondered if it was merely the foreign accent and ways that formed the barrier, or whether these slow-witted country bumpkins could have discerned and resented the intrinsic, secret difference between the Lemaitres and themselves. Sometimes she found herself wishing that the difference did not exist; though she well knew that these people had no desire to be other than they were, no curiosity to be told or to understand that wonderful doctrine which begins with statistics showing the iniquity of the existing order; proceeds to provide illuminated passports to Utopia; and ends, as often as not, by conducting eager disciples to prison or to exile.

I do not know whether this lukewarmness towards the faith of her father sprang from a lurking tenderness for a certain fine, stalwart young man, Roger Elliott, the son of his lordship's head-keeper. It is possible; but if it was so, Lois Lemaitre did not betray it even to herself.

It has already been said that Buckler's Hard provided plenty of occupation for my lord's keepers; and Elliott senior, who had seen the best days of an active life, was

not averse to allowing a goodly part of the duties, which this outlying Alsatia involved, to slip on to the broad shoulders of his son.

Roger Elliott bore the fatigue of night-watching, and the anxiety of rearing birds, with an equanimity born of unflagging energy; but I do not think that every journey he made across the marshy flats to Buckler's Hard was undeniably and professionally requisite. In fact, every one in the place knew that if Lois Lemaître had not lived there, Roger Elliott would have found fewer occasions to come and lean over the fence which divided the green from the old ship-yard, while his dogs sat round him, with lolling tongues, giving the ground expectant pats with their tails as their stock of patience gradually dwindled away.

"It's a pity for him," his father would lament. "I fear he's altogether took up wi' she; and as to she, her's far and away too much of a lady to look at the likes o' he. Now, if it'd bin Alice Gregory or Mary Budden, he might 'a done well. But Missy Maisters, she ain't for the likes of ha."

"And that's what I can't agree with, Elliott," Mrs. Elliott had answered, more than once, with maternal pride. "Look at our Roger, he's six-foot-two in his stockin's, a fair two inches taller than thee wast when——"

"Thou didna' marry me for my statter, my wench," interposed the keeper, "and why should she take to him for his?"

"I don't say her should. I on'y say he's a fine fellow, wi' hair as curly and crisp as ever a one, and eyes as clear and honest as a lass could look into it; and a lad as never shamed us, nor told a lie, nor wasted his money wi' wrongful doin's. And he earns his wages as under-keeper now; and when thou'rt laid by, maybe his lordship'll make him head-keeper for thy sake, seein' he's more up to the work than the other keepers. Now, that's our Roger, and just tell me if that's the sort of a sweetheart for any girl to turn up her nose at?"

"Nay, wench, there's no talk o' sweethearts, nor yet o' turning-up noses; Missy Maisters is proper spoken to all, in as far as she can be, seein' she were brought up to use furrin' langwidge. But her's far and away above our Roger, and her knows it so well, that there's no need for her to show it."

"Don't tell me that, Elliott," returned his wife, emphatically. "Isn't it known

to every one in Bewley, and right away to Brockenhurst and Lymington, what we are, and respectable folks, too? But just you tell me what those French folks are, and where they came from, and why they came here, and it all depends on what you find to say to that whether or no she's too good for the best young man, bar none, on this estate." To which challenge Mr. Elliott found it discreet to attempt no reply. "You've got nothin' you can say," Mrs. Elliott continued, triumphantly. "You can on'y tell me what I know already—or, perhaps, not quite so much—how this Frenchman come and took the old house at Buckler's Hard, and a bit o' land, and farms it all upside down, and has meals at odd times, and talks to himself as if he was silly. And if his girl is such a great lady, why doesn't she dress as such, and not wear straight-up-and-down petticoats, and old hats, which the housemaids at the great house wouldn't say thank you for them?"

"You needn't get cross, my wench," replied Mr. Elliott, in a conciliatory tone. "I don't know but what they are a bit queer. Still, Mr. Cotterill would never ha' took them as his lordship's tenants if they hadn't shown their papers ansetterer."

"It's my opinion, Elliott," said his wife, gravely, "that Mr. Cotterill let them down very easy, seein' the years that house stood empty before they took it; and for my part I had rather it stood empty still, than that our Roger should be always lingering off there to get a sight of a girl who scarce looks at him, even when he speaks to her as respectful as he does to my lady herself."

Though the main outline of Mrs. Elliott's picture was correct, the last detail was certainly exaggerated. It is impossible to say if Lois Lemaître's heart beat any faster at the sight of Roger Elliott, but her manner towards him was always gracious; she never expressed any unwelcome surprise when she so frequently found him standing by the gate which led from Bewley towards the woods, or showed any reluctance to accept his escort when he was going her way, which was invariably the case. So it happened on the last evening in August, when twilight was already deepening the shadows of the forest, that Lois, on her way home from Bewley, came upon Roger and his dogs while she had yet three-quarters of the way to go.

"It's a nice evenin' for a stroll, Miss Lois," the keeper began, as a safe opening

remark; he always felt a little bashful when he had succeeded in waylaying his liege lady.

"It is quite a magnificent evening," returned Lois, with the easily expressed enthusiasm of her nationality. "It makes one love the forest to see it so beautiful. Ah! I shall have great sorrow to say good-bye to this beautiful place."

"What do you mean?" asked Roger, with sudden dread. "You are not going away from Buckler's Hard, are you?"

"It will happen so some day. We have so often said good-bye to places. We have lived in large cities and in places lonelier even than Buckler's Hard. Life has been full of change ever since I can remember."

"That must be a bit wearing," suggested the keeper. "You don't like it, do you?"

"It is not a matter of choice," answered the girl, a little sadly. "It is of no use to think of likes and dislikes unless one has a choice."

"Ah," said Roger, with a long indrawn breath, which might have been a sigh from a more sophisticated organisation, "I can't say yea or nay to that, yet it seems to me that the less choice we have in a matter, the more we think o' what we like and dislike."

Then there was a pause; the path grew narrower, and the keeper fell deferentially behind his companion, while the dogs submissively closed the line of march. Presently he began to speak again.

"Our Lizzie," he said, with some hesitation in his manner, "isn't timid; but she won't walk out here alone, late of an evening as may be now."

"She will not? And why not?"

"Her's feared to, that's why."

"And of what has she fear?" asked Lois.

"Well, she ain't over fond o' gipsies, and such like vagabonds; and then though it's early in the evening for real mischief, still you might come across one or two whose names I could mention if I chose, and who might cut up rough if you saw them with a gun, or a handful o' snares. Anyhow, Miss Lois, you'd far better not be hereabouts alone when it's getting dark, as may be now, if I wasn't here too."

"Thank you, Roger Elliott," replied Lois. "I will bear in mind what you say."

"And them as means mischief will be at it this week and next, and already they've made a good haul of birds to send to Southampton and Portsmouth in time for to-

morrow. There's always birds in the shops the very day they come in season; but they shan't be his lordship's any more, I'll take care."

"Roger," said the girl, quietly, "you're a good, honest man. Does it never strike you that you have a cruel part to fill in this world?"

"Do you mean shooting wild things, miss? Nay, that's not cruel."

"I don't know; but it is not that I mean; it is something about poaching. If I could I would tell you; but English is hard, and I should not make it clear. Only this: my father says a day is coming when people will see more clearly the right from the wrong."

The keeper shook his head.

"Poachers won't, Miss Lois," he replied; "they'll always mix right and wrong, and worry the lives out of we keepers."

"But suppose there were no keepers?"

"No keepers!" exclaimed Roger. "Why, what in the world would happen to the game?"

"The wild creatures," answered the girl, "would no longer be considered as game."

Her companion gave his head an incredulous shake.

"That might do in furrin parts, miss; such as you've been used to; but it wouldn't answer here. His lordship always has preserved, and he always will; and if birds is to be reared, there must be keepers; and as long as there's scamps, some of them'll be poachers, so there you are."

"Yes," said Lois, composedly. "I knew I spoke of what would be strange to you; and now I thank you for bringing me home, and I bid you good night."

"Good night, miss," he replied, with a timid look into his goddess's face; "but you shouldn't talk so any more. If it got to his lordship's ears he might be vexed."

At which friendly warning Lois smiled on him so sweetly that he went away wondering if he might not pluck up heart some day to try his fate; and therewith he fell into such pleasant meditations that he did not hear the approach of his friend the coastguardsman from the next station down the water, until a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice said:

"Just the man I wanted; and, if you're bound for any place in special, I'll jine company for a few minutes."

"I'm going up the brick-yard way," re-

turned Roger; "but if there's anything you want, say the word."

"Well, I want nothing for myself, I'm glad to say. It ain't a Custom-House job, and don't consarn us; but it's an ugly-looking business, and what isn't our business may still be yours."

"I don't care how ugly it looks, if you've only found something out about the scamps who killed yon coveys of birds."

"That I can't quite say," rejoined the coastguardsman, cautiously. "I'll only tell you what I've been watching. It ain't once, and it ain't twenty times as my mate and me have known a boat come sculling down from this direction in the dead o' night, which always meets another boat fur down the water; and then there's something hauled out of one boat into the other, after which they sculls off in opposite directions as hard as they can. We've done our best to get to the bottom of it; but what with them being so wary, and changing their times, and having a lighter boat than ours, they always baulked us; but we stuck to it and made somethin' out at last, which it ain't much, but enough to show that nothink is landed here which consarns either Customs or Excise; though whether there isn't some breakage of the game laws isn't quite so positive. Whereby, thinks I, I'll give young Roger the straight tip to be at the old ship-yard, say to-night, after the moon has set, and let him see whether any of his lordship's property gets shipped off down stream to sell for what it'll fetch at Cowes or Southampton. I mentions no names," he concluded, "tain't my place to blacken any man's character unless I'm on oath."

"Thank'ee," said Roger. "I'm sorry another man instead o' me should ha'tracked them out; but, so long as we get hold of the rascals it's all the same, and the names is of no consequence. That'll come out soon enough; or even if they go by an alias it won't keep them from getting what they deserve. I shall take Mike with me; he'll make sure of them, and teach them a thing or two they won't forget into the bargain."

Mike was the watch-dog whose name was a terror not only to evil-doers, but to those whose deeds did not come under the jurisdiction of such extreme severity.

"Yes," assented the coastguardsman. "Mike'll be the man for that business. Good night, Roger, and good luck to you."

"Good night, Tom, and thank'ee;" and the two representatives of law and order

parted, the coastguardsman to go back to his station, and the keeper to the kennels, to fetch reinforcements for his night's adventure.

During all that month of August there had been stirring news from Paris. A long expected political crisis was taking place, and a new Chamber of Deputies was to be elected. Day by day the excitement of the contests increased. Candidate strove to outvie candidate in egoistic self-glorification, in altruistic self-devotion, in glowing schemes, in specious promises, in dazzling eloquence, in daring paradox.

Every hoarding in Paris was tapestried with addresses to electors. Every kiosk overflowed with the fugitive publications which such an occasion originates, and which perish from sight and memory when the battle is gained and lost.

Among these was conspicuous a well-printed single sheet, entitled in scarlet letters three inches long, "Le jour qui viendra," "The day that is coming." It was sold for a sou; but its style and fashion would have justified a higher price. Every one bought it; every one read it; every one was astonished at its bold tone, which spared none and sided with none; and every one agreed that, if it did not disappear voluntarily when the excitement had cooled down, its source would inevitably be sought out and suppressed by whatever party gained the upper hand.

But such a search would have been a difficult one. It would probably have been a long while before the French authorities discovered the little hand-press in the upper room whose windows looked out on the solitude of the New Forest and the forsaken water, where the fiery soul of Eustace Lemaitre worked and waited in his exile.

The work the old Communist had undertaken required more than mere enthusiastic zeal; the cost of the press had been a matter of enormous self-denying economy; the continuous strain of production required much patience from both father and son; and when these difficulties were overcome there remained the risk they ran in transporting the precious freight secretly, two or three times a week, down the water, and in transferring it to a French fishing-boat at the river mouth. The owner of this boat, Lemaitre's brother, undertook the most dangerous part of all, that of landing a contraband cargo with his fish, in some

favourable, quiet spot across the Channel. More than once Lemaitre had believed they were watched. Once he knew they had been followed, and a visit from the Custom-House officers confirmed his suspicions. If the crisis had been less urgent, he would have let some time elapse before attempting to send off another supply of papers.

"But," as he said to his son and daughter that evening, when Lois had returned from Bewley, and was helping with the packing, "the crisis is too terrible; we must not flinch, or hesitate. These words we send to-night may be the final, convincing words. And what does it concern these blockheads if we send a paper, of which they could not read or understand a word, to a land of which they know nothing?"

"The less it concerns them," replied Jean-Jacques, in a dubious tone, "the more it will gratify them to know it. And remember if, with the discovery of the paper, the secret of your whereabouts should transpire, one cannot foresee what may happen."

"I do not care for consequences. My life is pledged to action. The word must go forth." As he spoke he took up a revolver, and examined it. "The douanier," he continued, "was a bit of a fool. He could not see the wood for trees. He was looking for the brandy and cigars we had smuggled; he saw a small press, a compositor's desk; that raised no alarm in his mind. Imagine, if he had been a Russian or a compatriot of our own! But a John Bull, he is so sure of being clever; he knows too much to learn anything. Ah, if poor Pierre had but such as he to face on the other side! Lois, my child, when we are gone, go to bed. If we see reason to do so we may land down the water, or we may take the boat round to Hythe."

"Let us hope," said Jean-Jacques, "that no such necessity will occur."

It was always Monsieur Lemaitre who did the talking on these occasions; it was only when the lights were extinguished, and he and his son, bearing their precious freight, had left the house, that he subsided into silence.

Their cautious footsteps were scarcely audible above the many whispers which wander all night long about the woodland and the water, yet some one was on the alert, and discerned them. There was first a low, savage growl, and then a man's voice spoke from the shore, just where the boat lay moored:

"Good night to you! You are stirring about late."

The Lemaitres halted, but they did not speak.

"What are you carrying there?" asked the voice again. And when there was still no answer: "What are you bringing down to the boat?"

"What is that to you?" replied a voice, which both the Elliotts recognised with a start—Roger, of dismay.

But for him, as a keeper, duty was duty, and secret proceedings savoured of poaching. Moreover, he remembered the incomprehensible words that Lois had spoken that very evening.

"It may be all right, sir," he replied, firmly, "but you'd better let us make sure without any fuss. A thing done in the dark, and on the sly, has a nasty look about it."

"We shall want to see what's in that heavy package," added the elder Elliott—who had no grounds for treating Lois's father with consideration—"before we allow you to place it in this boat."

"How do you know we wish to place it in the boat, my good fellow?" rejoined Lemaitre, disdainfully. "But if we do, we shall not ask your permission. We have not been pilfering the game which it is your business to keep for your own plunder, and if you bar our way, we must clear you out of it."

"You won't do that so easily," returned Elliott, angrily. "We've got the dog. He's muzzled, but he'll be a match for you if I loose him, as I shall do when you try to pass me."

"Ah, you threaten, do you? Well, then, so do I; I carry pistols, which I use if you continue to interfere with us."

"Now, sir," cried the keeper, "no bluster; 'twon't fright us, nor help you. If you've got all square there, prove it, like an honest man should, when he's laid himself open to doubt."

But the fiery temper which had brought the old patriot into exile was thoroughly aroused. He gave a sign to his unwilling, hesitating son, and they raised their burden again. Then there was a sound of a hastily opened door, of quick footsteps across the grass, and a voice trembling with agitation came through the darkness, pleading in that unknown tongue which suggested so many suspicions to the illiterate mind.

How the rest all came to pass no one ever knew. It was the elder keeper who

was holding the dog, and who loosed him; but whether before or after the report of Monsieur Lemaitre's pistol, it was impossible to decide when the time of investigation came. The discharge of the pistol harmed no one; for Lois had seized and uplifted her father's arm, so that the weapon went off in the air. Nevertheless, there was a cry of agony, which ended in a smothered gasp and a heavy fall; while the two Lemaitres remained standing, their outline looming out from the dim background of marsh.

"Great heavens!" cried Roger, "Mike has got Miss Lois."

"She should ha' kept out of the row," responded his father, "but any way, he's muzzled; she'll be more frightened than hurt."

In another moment the fierce, eager creature was secure in his master's keeping again, and Monsieur Lemaitre on one side, and Roger on the other, were bending over Lois, whose pale face gleamed in the darkness; but who gave no sign of consciousness.

"Speak, my darling, speak," implored her father; "tell me thou art not hurt."

"She has fainted," said Roger; "let me carry her into the house for you."

"Do not touch her," cried Lemaitre, fiercely. "I am strong enough to carry my child myself. Lay you no finger on her." Then, with wonderful change of tone, "Speak, my pretty one; it is I, thy father, who puts his arms about thee. Ah! she says no word, and how strangely her head droops as I raise her. Come to me, my son, lay thy hand on her bosom; why is she so still? Great Heaven, have they dared to slay my child before my eyes?"

Then Jean-Jacques took up the passive form of his sister in his arms, and went slowly back by the way that he and his father had carried the burden of patriotic prophecy, which they little thought would cost them so dear; and when they had tried, without avail, all the means which their tenderness or their knowledge could suggest, the two men looked into one another's pallid face, and the father said:

"I have been ready for sacrifice all my life; but what day that can come now, will ever atone for this terrible night?"

Poor Monsieur Lemaitre! the bitter blow of his daughter's sudden tragical death was by no means the sum total of his troubles. There was an inquest over her, at which many troublesome questions were asked; and which threw much more publicity on

the former career and present pursuits of the strangers than was pleasant for them, and of which the final consequence, as far as Buckler's Hard was concerned, was the evacuation of the overseer's house—which has stood empty ever since.

The Elliotts were acquitted of all blame. The death, the doctors said, was not caused immediately by the dog, which had left no marks on the body of Lois; but resulted from some unsuspected heart-disease, fatally developed by the agitation of the moment. The magistrate decided that the keepers had not exceeded their right in the discharge of their duty; Monsieur Lemaitre ought not to have produced and discharged firearms; and his daughter ought not to have interfered in the fray.

Notwithstanding, Roger Elliott's conscience never fully acquitted him of the death of his first and best love, whose last cry haunts him still, whenever his duties as keeper bring him, on starless summer nights, to the lonely marshes round Buckler's Hard.

From what coign of vantage Monsieur Lemaitre watched those memorable elections, or whether he had the heart to watch them at all, I cannot say. While the stir of them still lasted, the Parisians asked in vain at the kiosks for the broadsheet with the red title.

"Ah! it appears no longer," they said, regretfully; "we knew it would be so, sooner or later; but it was a good sou's worth, while it lasted, 'Le jour qui viendra.'"

CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

BY "RITA."

Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan," "My Lord Conceit," etc.

CHAPTER XX.

"THE LAST VERSE OF THE SONG."

I MIGHT, of course, relate a good many incidents that happened after leaving Miss Anatesta; but, somehow, they haven't much to do with the principal characters in my story, and I don't suppose would be of much interest to any one but myself.

It was quite a year afterwards that I saw Miss Kate again, though she had always kept me informed of her health and her whereabouts, and the progress of the children. When I had the letter that told me she was in town, and would like to see me, I was still at my old occupation

of caretaking, and must say was beginning to get a little tired of it. The fact of knowing my dear young mistress was in town again, and that I should see her pretty face once more, quite cheered me up. She was living in Grosvenor Street, and I went there the evening of the day on which I had received her letter, having secured a young person, a neighbour, to take charge of the house while I left it; for one of my experiences is, that if any one does call to look at an empty house, they are pretty sure to do it just as you've run out on an errand, or to fetch yourself some necessary—caretakers, so far as I can judge, not being above creature-comforts more than any other class of person, though agents appear to think once they're in the house they ought to become "fixtures," like the blinds, and curtain-poles, and grates.

I must confess to feeling a little nervous as I sat in the boudoir, waiting for Miss Kate. I could not help thinking of when I had last seen her, now two years ago, and wondering if she was changed at all, and if she had got over that unfortunate fancy that had once threatened to wreck her life.

Presently, I heard some one singing. Then—a light foot on the stairs, and she ran into the room, her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkling; just her old, bright, pretty, merry self, and just the old, sweet, familiar greeting:

"Oh, my dear, dear old Jane, how are you?"

My heart seemed to give a great throb of gladness and relief as I caught her in my arms and kissed her. For a moment or two I could not speak; but soon I grew calmer, and could sit quietly down and listen to the accounts of foreign scenes and foreign travel that she gave me. The boys were at a school in the country, and she and Mr. Carruthers had just come up for the season.

"But that's not what I wanted to see you about, Jane," she said, presently. "I don't like the idea of your living that comfortless life you do, so I'm going to ask you to be my housekeeper while I'm in town. Of course at Templecombe there's Mrs. Riley, who's a fixture in the Carruthers family; but here it's different. And when we are not in town, you can stay and take care of the house, if you will, so that at least you've a home always ready, and need not drift about as you've been doing so long."

I suppose I should have been a fool to refuse such an offer. So it is scarcely necessary to say I accepted it; and, after a long talk, we agreed that I should go to my agent next day, and tell him he must find some one else to take charge of the house.

I went home very happy that night. We never alluded to our last meeting, nor, so far as I could see, did Miss Kate seem to have a single recollection of it. Mr. Tresyllion's name was never mentioned, and I thought probably she had long forgotten him and the foolish romance that had once made her so unhappy.

She looked as young, as pretty, as mischievous as ever. Her laugh was as light, her words as merry as those of the Kate of old. Only now and then I fancied there was a hard look about her face when it was in repose, and a more frequent lapse into cynicism and sarcasm when she spoke of people than she had once used to display. But these changes and flashes were so swift that I could scarcely be sure they were real; and when her husband came in, and she told him about me, and stood there with her hand slipped through his arm, and teased him in her pretty, wilful way, and I saw his adoring look at her as she talked or laughed, or moved in restless, excited fashion about the room, I thought to myself: "Oh, thank Heaven! she is safe and happy still."

I can safely say I had never been so comfortable in my life as when I took my place as housekeeper to Miss Kate. I had my own room. My duties were very light, and my pretty, sweet, young mistress seemed as if she could never make enough of me.

Not a day passed but she would run into my room for a chat, or have me up to her boudoir, and tell me all her gay doings and how she enjoyed the season, and all its amusements and distractions. And still, like a secret—shared—but unspoken, that one name lay between us with all its memories and all the consciousness that it was in our thoughts.

It was not an unfrequent occurrence for me to sit up in her dressing-room one or two nights in the week, so that her maid, a fine, French young person, with more vanity than sense, might go to bed and save her complexion, as she expressed it. Then I used to do the little services of maid to my young lady as in the old days, and she would chatter away to me while I

brushed her hair, or folded up her lovely gowns, and wraps, and dainty laces.

One night—it was in the early part of June, I remember—she came home from some entertainment, or ball, and I was waiting up for her in the dressing-room.

It was not late—about one o'clock, I think—when I heard the carriage drive up. The footman opened the door, and I heard Mr. Carruthers go into the smoking-room, and presently Miss Kate came into the bedroom which opened out of the room where I was waiting.

I rose from the chair and laid aside the book I had been reading, or dozing over, and then walked over to the door, dividing the two rooms, which stood ajar.

She was standing before the toilet-table, and I saw her face reflected in the glass. What was there in it? Some look—something which, like a flash, carried me back to the day when she had torn off her pretty gold-hued gown, and faced me with a woman's sad and shamed confession of weakness.

For an instant my heart seemed to stand still. Then, she caught sight of me in the glass, and the expression of her face changed.

"You—Jane?" she questioned, in a hurried, absent sort of way. "Where is Félicie?"

"Gone to bed, ma'am," I answered. "She said she wasn't feeling well."

She made no remark, only threw off the long, creamy wrap of satin and fur that covered her bare, soft shoulders, and walked into the dressing-room. I followed. She held out her arms and I took off the glittering bracelets that had decked them, and unlaced her gown, and threw her dressing-robe round her, while she seated herself for me to brush out her hair.

She did not speak for some time, though usually she chattered to me from the moment I began toilet operations to the moment I finished. I brushed and combed the dusky, rippled mass of hair that fell to her waist in one luxuriant tangle, and from time to time I looked at her face as I saw it through that lovely, dusky veil, and wondered what she was thinking about.

At last she looked up and caught my eye. I saw a little hot flush rise in her cheeks.

"Oh, Jane!"—she cried suddenly, and then stopped; and her hands went up to her face and she hid it from me, and her breast heaved with a quick, stormy sigh beneath the soft lace and cashmere of her wrapper.

"Miss Kate," I said gravely and almost harshly, "you have met—him—again. I saw it in your face the moment you entered the other room."

Then her hands dropped; she lifted her head and shook back the rich, dusky hair, and her eyes were like stars—so large they were and bright. And oh, how sweet she looked, and young, and fair, and yet—how sad.

"Yes, Jane," she said quietly, "I have met him again, after two years—two long, dreary, empty years that have only served to show me more plainly than ever what a mistake I made in marrying John Carruthers."

I dropped the soft, bright tress of hair. I simply stood and looked in a dazed, stupid way at the mirror—the mirror which showed me her face and mine.

There was something in the words, or, rather, the quiet, despairing way in which they were spoken, which seemed to tell me that remonstrance or rebuke were alike useless.

She had met her fate—as many and many a man and woman does—too late. That was all the story, as yet. How much more of it was still to follow I could not say; I dared not think.

"Don't fancy I am going to be foolish," she went on, her voice cold, and stern, and unlike itself. "That is over and done with, thank goodness. But, Jane, badly as he treated me in the old days, he has not—forgotten. I had my triumph to-night. He can suffer still, and I can make him; at any hour, at any moment, I can deal out to him the shame and humiliation he made me bear once."

"It is a dangerous experiment," I said, gravely. "Oh, my dear, be warned by me. Avoid him; shun him, cost what it may. You fancy you are safe; but, indeed, you are playing with fire, and the scorch and the pain of it will make themselves felt, believe me. If—if you loved your husband, it would not matter; but you have no safeguard, if, as you say, you repent your marriage, and repent it because another man has taught you what you have missed in it——"

"Dear old Croaker," she said laughing, and looking back at me with bright, dark eyes, in which a strange and feverish light burned and flashed. "Always the same wise old Jane, with warnings and prophecies. Don't be afraid of me now. A woman doesn't require to be taught such a lesson as mine twice. I learned it very

perfectly. I am not afraid to practise its results."

"Tell me," I said, "how you met."

"It was not very romantic," she said, with a little, hard laugh. "I have often thought we might meet. It was to be expected that we should do so, soon or late; but when we did, it was never as I had pictured or imagined it. I have been to an 'At Home,' at Lady A——'s, to-night. Lady A—— is one of those women who run after 'somebodies,' and Mr. Tresyllion is a great deal of a 'somebody' now. His books are the rage of the season, and he, consequently, is run after by everybody. Well, I was in the refreshment-room with a tepid youth of the London masher type, who had languidly exerted himself to bring me an ice, and then to remark that it was a 'wa-am evening,' or something equally brilliant. I think our conversation had proceeded no further than that, when I heard a voice behind me say: 'What may I bring you—ice or claret-cup?' I turned slightly, but the voice needed no confirmation. Instinct had told me whose it was. We looked straight at one another. I can answer for myself, I did not change colour. My face was just as it always is; but he—he grew white as death. Then he bowed. It was not his place to do so—first; but I overlooked the breach of etiquette, and the return was so slight that I think before he procured that ice, or had become aware of the fact that his companion desired it, he had also become aware that, between the woman he had known two years before and the woman he met to-night, there was a difference that defied explanation, and disarmed any attempt he might have made to justify himself or his conduct to her. No doubt my mild escort wondered that an ice-cream could impart such brilliance and fluency to the conversation of a woman who had been about as dull as himself a quarter of an hour previously; but he beamed, and melted, and became quite entertaining, and I passed out of the room on his arm, without a word or glance in response to the pleading eyes which had scarcely left my face."

"And was that all?" I asked.

"Not quite. There was music going on upstairs. Not long after I had come back to the drawing-room, I saw that he was going to sing. You know his way of old, Jane—the sort of careless gesture that swept every one and everything aside, as he would seat himself at the piano. There was a large mirror opposite. I could see

his face, but he could not see me, or even guess if I was looking, or listening. I wondered what he would sing. I heard the old, familiar, ringing touch, the clear, full sound of the chords, and then—then, Jane——"

"Yes?" I said, for she suddenly bent her head on her hands, and a little sob escaped her.

"Oh!" she cried, with sudden, passionate wrath, as she sprang to her feet, and began pacing fiercely to and fro the room. "Oh, Jane, Jane, it was shameful, cruel, wicked of him—he sang those words he had written to me—do you remember? I told you about them once, when—when we spoke about him, and——"

"And Mrs. Cray," I interposed, quietly. "Yes, Miss Kate, I remember—'My Lady of Moods.'"

"That was it," she said, the colour flaming in her cheek, and her great eyes flashing through the angry tears—"and he sang it there—to me—before all those people!—sang it so that they hushed their idle talk to listen; sang it so that it should ring in my ears, Jane, till I grow mad, or forget, or—die!"

"Oh, Miss Kate!" I entreated, "don't talk so wildly; don't——"

"I can't help it," she cried, "I can't—help—it. Music is the one thing that affects and thrills me, and carries me away. And you know his voice. Fancy it pleading, praying, thrilling in passionate entreaty to one woman whom alone, among a crowd of hundreds, he chose should hear and listen—and understand. That was the worst of it, Jane. I—I could not help myself. I had to listen—I had to understand. And the new verse—the verse I had never heard till to-night—told me a whole story in itself. I can't forget it. Would to Heaven I could!"

"It was ungenerous, unmanly of him," I said bitterly. "But it is only on a par with everything else he has done where you are concerned. For Heaven's sake, for the sake of your own peace of mind, Miss Kate, don't let your thoughts dwell on him. What good can come of it to either of you?"

"None," she said, wearily, "none, Jane. You are quite right. But thought cannot be fettered, or memory either; and though I hate him now, and though I feel I could not bear to touch his hand or look ever into his eyes again, yet he has been able to make me desperately unhappy—to-night."

"But to-morrow," I said, "you will find it easier."

She did not answer for a moment; only stood there and looked at me with eyes that were very mournful, and a face that had turned very pale. Then she lifted both arms, and pushed back the cloud of her hair; and so standing and holding it, for all the world like some lovely little picture just stepped from its frame, she began to sing softly, half to herself, half to me, the words of that song she had heard:

Alas! for the life and the heart and the soul of me,
All that has gone with a day that is done,
She whom I love so—possessing the whole of me,
Leaves me the shadows, and flies to the sun.

Oh, for a tear of her,

Oh, for a fear of her,

Oh, for a day or an hour that was dear of her!

Never a dream but is haunted by smile of her.

Never a thought but recalls every wile of her.

Heart of my heart—she has broken the heart of me,

Soul of my soul—who will never be part of me,
She whom I love—but will never be love of me,
Song of my sorrows—My Lady of Moods!

CHAPTER XXI. A NIGHT OF MORALISING.

As the song ended, her arms fell; a change swept over her. A little ironic laugh parted her lips, and chimed on the stillness.

"Did I say I was unhappy?" she said. "Nonsense, don't believe me, Jane. I am not; I—I won't be. I mean to enjoy life as I never enjoyed it before. Why shouldn't I? Haven't I everything the heart of woman can desire—wealth, position, luxury, love, friendship? And isn't my good old John worth a hundred fickle flirts, with handsome faces, and inconstant hearts?"

"I should say so, my dear," I answered, gravely. "But I'm afraid you may not always think it."

"I shall think it," she said, "if I make up my mind."

She linked her hands together and stood for a moment or two quite still, as if thinking out the subject in its gravity and importance.

The attitude was so pretty, and the little thing looked so sweet that I felt my eyes grow dim as I looked at her—wondering a little, too, in my own mind that the childish, dimpled loveliness of face and figure had so little altered, despite the changes that wifehood and maternity so often bring.

"I wish," I said at last, breaking the silence that was so serious and, perhaps—momentous, "I wish, Miss Kate, you

would make up your mind to avoid this man. It is the sentiment of the acquaintance that is so dangerous. There are memories in the background—and he—he is very fascinating, I know. Remember, older and wiser women than yourself have bent to the charm. Miss Kate, shall I tell you—something?"

"Yes, Jane," she said quickly, turning paler as she looked up and met my eyes.

"He has given up Mrs. Cray," I said. "And she is a widow now."

"A widow!" she started, and the colour came in a warm, bright flood to her face. "Is that true, really—and—and you think he ought to have married her?"

"Think," I said bitterly, "of course I think it. She wrecked her whole life for him. But, there, that is always the way. What a man has, he ceases to value! If women would only think—would only remember——"

"Don't you think," she said, sadly, "that it must be very hard to do that always? There are feelings that are too strong for one; it is impossible to keep cool and self-controlled. Just up to a certain point one can do it, but beyond——"

"Miss Kate," I cried, in sudden terror, "it has surely never gone beyond with you?"

"You need not ask," she said, wearily. "I have shown you my whole heart, Jane. You are the earliest friend I have. You know me as no one else knows me. It has been hard, but I think I have won the battle at last; and if I weary you with my confidences, Jane, and if I am as wilful and troublesome as the child you used to scold and punish, you must be patient with me. Remember, I have no one to whom I can speak—to whom I dare speak, but you. And if I had to keep silence; if I had to brood, and brood, and remember, and regret; and fight always—always—the old, terrible conflict with my nature as I know it, with myself as I am—I think I should go mad, Jane, or—kill myself!"

And, looking at her, I thought so too.

I had no sleep that night; I could only think of my pretty dear—the child dearer to me in her womanhood than ever she had been in her childhood—the one human creature in all the earth whom I loved.

To and fro, feverish and restless, I tossed, and memory brought back scene after scene in which she had played a part. All her pretty, bright ways, her mischief, and fun, her caprices, and whims, and the

dare-devilry that ran through her actions, the recklessness which marked her impulses.

Would she ever really change, and grow calm, and tame, and content? Would she ever come to be the sort of woman to whom her household arrangements, her servants' iniquities, her toilettes, her amusements, her visiting-list, and the engagements, distractions, and frivolities of society would be life and occupation? I felt sure she would not.

All the theories and speculations I had heard from Dr. Carneggie and the little American spiritualist came back to my mind.

Why should there be so much suffering? Why so much pain? Why so many tears, and sighs, and sorrows; so much torture for such poor results? I thought of scenes I had witnessed; of powers wrecked by wanton waste of body and mind; of men's strength rapped by infamous tempting; of genius turned to madness; of the selfishness of passion; the misery of lives ill-matched and unsuited; the ingratitude of children; the faithlessness of conjugal life; the treachery of friends; the hypocrisy of religion; the shams, tricks, shifts, and strategies which go to make up the life of man to his fellow man; and the more I thought the more miserable I became, and the more hopeless it all seemed, and I could only toss to and fro—sleepless, fevered, unhappy—and hear, like an echo of my thoughts, the one cry which rings throughout humanity: "What use? What use? What use?"

Look at love, the one passion, as I said somewhere before, that seems to rule or wreck every human life. What folly it is; what waste it is; what misery it is!

Begun on impulse, carried on for caprice, distraction, amusement, suddenly turning into a tyrant, and ruling and tormenting its hapless slaves. Regarded through a veil of illusion that is bound to be rent asunder soon or late, always promising blessings that are rarely if ever realised, dealing out an hour of bliss here and there, to be atoned for by tears of blood, by rack and wrench of fortune; taking the gold of one life, and giving in exchange the dross of another; maddening with spells that defy the analysis of common sense, and laugh reason to scorn; content with nothing short of the very life blood of the heart it calls its own. Oh, surely it must be a sight that makes angels weep—if, indeed, they interest themselves at all

about the lives and troubles of poor humanity!

And what is the moral to this "tale of a sleepless night" as far as I and my story are concerned? I suppose just my fear of Miss Kate and Mr. Tresyllion's renewed acquaintance. For I did fear it; and perhaps all the more because I knew her so well, and knew that everything that could most fascinate and attract her, was bound up in this one "edition of young manhood."

His looks, his manners, his great natural gifts—the strain of sentiment and romance that go to make up a nature at once poetic and melancholy, even in lighthearted youth—his supposed faithlessness, which had hurt her pride, and shown her the danger of the attraction she had dreamed so innocent: all these set themselves in array, and seemed to warn me of danger.

I knew he had not forgotten. I knew that the frail thread of attraction, which had bound him to another woman, had long since been snapped; and I knew that he would not and could not have written and sung those words she had repeated, unless some purpose had been in the background.

The refrain haunted even me. What, then, must it be to her—the inspiration and theme of it?

Oh, for a tear of her.

Oh, for a fear of her.

Oh, for a day or an hour that was dear of her.

If he meant that, he might mean more. So much lay in his power, and Fate always lends herself to the aid of those whose loves seem to be marked "impossible."

No wonder I could not sleep. No wonder I looked forward with dread to the days and weeks that loomed in the distance. I remembered that other season. I knew that it would be a sheer impossibility for Miss Kate to avoid him, unless he took the initiative and left town altogether.

How I wished he would! How I wished I had the courage to ask him! But I felt I could not compromise my mistress's dignity by such an act, or even add to his own vanity by letting him see I feared his attraction for her. No; there seemed nothing to be done but to let things take their course; and by the time I had arrived at this wise conclusion the dawn was lightening and broadening in the East, and I turned round and tried to get an hour's sleep before rising to perform the duties of the day.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Hamlyn," etc. etc.

CHAPTER IV. DUMPHIE IS AFFRONTED.

HAPPINESS is a great mystifier. We look upon things through an atmosphere that has a dazzle in it. We cannot see either plainly or clearly. Even retrospect plays tricks with us. As light radiates, so does our content spread itself out and blur the edges of time past and time present. Surely we have sailed upon this summer sea, both bright and calm, for many a day! It cannot be but yesterday that so fair a voyage was begun!

I dare say this sounds "high falutin" language to apply to such a locality as Prospect Place and such a middle-aged, prosaic person as Candace Birt, who has no deeper romance in her life than may be represented by an old kid glove. But the brightness that came into my life just at this time was very real—a beautiful, happy shining brightness, such as I had not known for many a year back. It made such a difference, Randall being married, and Lucille and the boys being really a part of us.

There, I have let the cat—or, rather, the four kittens—out of the bag.

It was the boys that so changed and brightened Prospect Place; more particularly Dumphie.

It came about that if a day passed without Dumphie's droll face appearing in our midst there seemed to be something wanting in that day. Even on one of her bad days, Sister Charlotte smiled when the boy drew near; and as to Kexia—well, the liberties the good woman let that boy take in the kitchen were beyond belief!

I have said very little of Stephen and John, the two "middle-men" of Lucille's quartette. But they are worthy of note. Both were solemn, round, self-possessed; they were always together, generally hand-in-hand, going partners in all games, and at night sleeping in the same little cot, like two plump birds cuddled up together in one nest.

Their passion was gardening, and they had a garden apiece at home, in which endless things were set; though nothing ever seemed to attain to any greater maturity than an odd green spike or two, or a stunted sprout here and there. The two used to come and "help Aunt Dacie" in that garden of which the pride was the poplar in its midst. I am not sure, by the way, that the roots of that majestic tree did not drain the soil of my small demesne of all its nourishment. Certainly other things grew with much apparent difficulty. Dumphie, after a critical examination, said the earth wanted "turning over." So Stephen and John, each armed with an old kitchen spoon, set to work to burrow like two little moles, and we hoped for the best results.

As to Glenarvon—otherwise Glennie—a special stool was told off to him, near Sister Charlotte's couch, on which he would sit enthroned like a small king, and Polly grew so fond of the child that she always greeted him as "My pretty dear!" and then made soft kissing noises with her big, black beak, climbing about in her cage and turning herself upside down in an ecstasy of welcome.

In fact, our house was pervaded by "the boys;" and the flood of young life brought brightness and change into our grey, middle-aged existences.

Not that Sister Charlotte and I are so

very old, after all. I have known many women of our years full of quite youthful buoyancy and brightness. But age is relative, and we have led those colourless lives that soon grow rusty.

"It's almost as good as having a family of one's own," I said to Kezia, as I looked up through the kitchen window at John and Stephen, insisting on both carrying the same watering-pot, and upsetting a good deal of the contents in consequence.

"Better, mum," said Kezia, rolling steadily at the paste for to-morrow's pie—"better a deal, for when you're tired of 'em, you can send 'em packing."

A sort of shame used to come over me sometimes, when I remembered how I had looked upon the boys as mere incumbrances. I understood, now, Lucille's devotion to them, and could enter into and admire the way they had of all gathering round her, like chicks about a hen, whenever she appeared upon the scene.

And this brings me to speak of another source of happiness in my changed life: the perfect content of my dear brother in his marriage. It was a beautiful thing to see then; it is a tender, pitiful memory now. I never saw anything quite so complete as their sympathy for and with each other. It was true, indeed, that saying of Randall's, in a day that now seemed long ago: "There has never been anything so good in my life before."

The change this happiness wrought in him was marvellous. He grew to look years younger; all trace of ill-health left him. He had the eyes of a boy, the step of a man young in heart and feeling.

"I wish the mother could bo' see him," Kezia would say, passing her apron across her eyes; "he's just bonnie. And I'm no' saying anything agen the 'cumbrances; they're better nor might be, considerable. And Master Glennie, he's a loikely child. And, 'Kezia,' says he, 'my feets do be so muddy; lif' me over to the mat.' So I lif's him, and he puts up his bit face and kisses me when I set him down. There's worse childer goin' than them, Miss Dacie, and that's all about it."

Dumphie patronised Prospect Place and all it contained. He backed to look up at the poplar, and said, yes, it was a good tree in its way, as if he rather thought it might be tempted one of these days to try to pass itself off as a cedar, or an oak; and it was just as well not to cocker it up too much.

He would stand warming his hands at

the fire, and looking gravely from me to Charlotte, and from Charlotte back to me, and finally break into speech, thus:

"I like you two. I'm glad I know you. It's nice to know you, and to come here when I like."

Sister Charlotte would get very red at this, and stare out of window, and cough behind her hand to give herself a countenance. But the grave, owl-like face of the child, watching us both with solemn innocence, obliged us to receive his gracious approval in the spirit in which it was given.

It will be remembered that on our first acquaintance the—well, let us call it absence of beauty on the part of Dumphie, had struck me forcibly. Now, I caught myself feeling hotly indignant, because some casual acquaintance ventured to hint that my brother's stepson was a plain child.

So do times change, and we with the times; and so the dearest of to-day may be the man or woman for whom, not very far back in the past, we entertained feelings of aversion and dislike.

The poplar having shaken its head free from the very last lingering leaf, had stood a bare, brown sentinel through the winter; once again the golden scrolls of a myriad buds had crept about its sides where little branches clustered thickly; once again the leaves, thick and verdant, whispered in the summer breezes, rustling over my head as I tended my lagging roses, and the blue-eyed *Nemophila*, in which the cats would make beds and roll themselves thereon impudently before my eyes. And now—the summer was past, the autumn at hand with its ruddy tints and beautiful decay.

Randall and Lucille had been married a year; a year that, as I looked back upon it, seemed so full of life and movement as to be like ten!

Swing, swing went the bushy head of our poplar-tree to this side and to that; down swirled the leaves, scattering here and there, scurrying off pursued by the wind, while my principal enemy, the black cat next door, chased an odd one or two, patting them gently with her paw as she brought them to a standstill.

I had on my big garden gloves, and my gardening hat; a prodigious headgear of the mushroom shape. Combined with a gardening hoe by way of sceptre, I found this costume marvellously well calculated to strike terror into bad and evil boys, who would clamber to the top of the garden wall, cast longing glances at my few poor

flowers, and at one stern glance from under the pent-house of my hat, and one up-raising of the hoe, would drop into the lane outside, as if, to quote Kezia, "They had seen a boggart."

In this fascinating gear, then, I was hopefully planting a few late asters, bought in a confiding spirit from a man at the door, when Dumphie, very red in the face, and evidently in a high state of indignation, marched out of the house and took up his stand right in front of me.

"Aunt Dacie," he said, panting a little as he spoke; "is there going to be anything the matter with my nose?"

Beyond being the most decided snub, I knew of no imperfection in Dumphie's nose; so I smiled and said:

"What do you mean, you silly child?"

"I mean that Kezia is a very rude woman; I mean that I am very angry, and that John, and Stevie, and Glen, will be very angry too. Kezia said that my nose was going to be put out of joint, and she felt it. Aunt Dacie—she felt it—with her rough hand."

I bent over the late asters. I did not look at Dumphie for a moment or two. Then I said:

"You must forgive Kezia this time, dear."

But Dumphie looked mutinous; and glared down through the kitchen-window, where he beheld Kezia, biting a corner of her apron to keep the laughter that was in her from bubbling over.

My garden operations finished—during which Dumphie was broodingly silent, and of impressive dignity as to demeanour—the boy and I passed into the house together; and, as luck would have it, encountered Kezia.

Dumphie stood stock still, barring her passage.

"You are a rude woman. You were very rude to—my nose," said he, "and I am very angry. Kezia, next time I come to see Aunt Dacie, I shall not come into the kitchen at all."

Doubtless Dumphie expected to hear Kezia cry, like the first murderer of old, that her punishment was greater than she could bear; but Kezia remained calm and smiling, possibly reflecting within herself that the smell of newly-baked cakes would quickly lure the quarry.

Dumphie's errand had been to tell me that Lucille would like to see me that afternoon. Lucille was not strong just now, and could not walk far at a time;

for a prospect was near at hand that put Sister Charlotte and myself quite in a flutter to think of; and really any one might have thought we had entered into second childhood, and taken to dolls again, had they judged by the quaint bits of garments that occasionally lurked in our work-baskets, hiding their improprieties under quilted silk covers, and worked at stealthily when quite safe from possible callers of the sterner sex.

Not but what Mr. Candytuft once got the better of us, calling at an absurdly early hour, and being shown into the back parlour, where I found him with a diminutive shirt stuck on his two fat thumbs by its tiny cambric sleeves.

"Blessed is the man that hath his quiver full of them," said, or rather bellowed, the reverend gentleman, as I entered; leaving it apparently an open question whether a multiplicity of shirts, or creatures to wear them, was the fact which conferred a blessing.

My confusion was extreme; but I called to mind the existence of no fewer than ten little Candytufts at home, and the consequent probability that Mr. Candytuft had seen several baby's shirts in the passing of the years.

Indeed, as I said to Sister Charlotte afterwards, it might have been worse. It might have been the curate, the very shyest creature, who blushed purple when Glennie said their cat at home had got three "dear little tittens." If kittens upset a man, what would anything suggestive of a baby do?

But I am quite forgetting Dumphie and his troubles, which was more than he did; for, as he and I walked over to the pleasant square near at hand, where Randall and Lucille had made their home, Dumphie every now and then took fits of deep thought, uneasily fingering the place where the bridge of his nose ought to have been—and wasn't.

I, too, looked askance at him now and then, wondering how he would take to a baby sister.

Of course there was no reason in the world why I should settle in this autocratic way that Lucille's baby would be a little girl, with the mother's soft, bright eyes, and a ruffled, curly head, like that picture of Randall when he was a boy, that mother used to count one of her most precious earthly treasures—no reason at all.

And yet I declare I saw the little

creature in my mind's eye so often, that she had become quite a familiar figure in my daily life. Indeed, if she had been a boy—dear, dear, I am getting sadly mixed in my genders—I should have felt nothing short of defrauded. Well, when this little maid should come, how would the fact of her existence be taken by the boys; in other words, by—Dumphie?

If Dumphie appropriated and patronised her, then the others would follow suit. Stephen and John would sit by her side, like two fat pigeons on a rail, and look at her complacently; and Glennie would say she was quite "perzackly."

We never quite knew, any of us, what Glennie meant by this mysterious word; but to him it was evidently a sound pregnant with meaning. If Glennie said you were "perzackly," then might you rejoice; if Glennie said of anything, it "doesn't be 'perzackly,'" and "Glennie doesn't love it," then was that thing anathema maranatha.

I was fain to hope, then, that Dumphie would approve of my infant niece, and Glennie would announce to a listening world that he considered the baby "quite 'perzackly.'"

That afternoon, when the boys were gone away to play at being bears in a wood upstairs, and Lucille and I were left alone in the pretty, cosy room she called her own, I was struck with the fragility of her appearance; the wan pallor of the face, lit up by the large, bright, pensive eyes; the colourlessness of the lips that trembled even as they smiled.

"Is anything the matter? Are you feeling worse than usual? Is that what you sent for me for?" I said, hurriedly.

"No, no," she answered, plucking playfully at my dress, and shaking her pretty head from side to side. "I only wanted to say a few words to you, Dacie, dear, to you who have been so good, so very good to me. I hardly know why I wanted to hear you say—what I know there is no need to say—because it goes without the saying."

I sat down with a jerk. I could not help it. My knees seemed to give way under me. I untied my bonnet-strings, also with a jerk, and flung them back.

"Lucille," I said, panting, "you are going to say something dreadful. I know you are!"

At this, she caught and held me.

"Nay, dear; nothing dreadful. Foolish, if you will. Since, as I said before, it is only a fond fancy of mine to hear you say—"

"Do not," I cried, putting my hands to her shoulders and pushing her back from me; "do not speak the thing that is in your heart. Lucille! Lucille! I cannot bear it. You know what he said, 'There had never been anything so good in his life before; never anything so good.'"

Slowly the tears gathered in the great, soft eyes—slowly fell—yet a smile was on the pale, sweet lips.

"I know," she said. "I know that it has been very good; but yet, dear Dacie, dear sister, God does not give us happiness as an out-and-out gift; it is always His to take back when He wills; often it is but lent us for a while. I have had so little of it in my life that this one year has been——"

Her voice faltered, then broke to a sob; while, as for me, I was a perfect wreck. Glennie could not possibly have described Aunt Dacie as "quite perzackly," had he seen her with bonnet tilted all awry, and a face puckered up to keep the tears back; indeed, a glimpse of myself presently caught in the mirror, showed me nothing less than the ruins of a middle-aged lady slightly intoxicated as to headgear.

I was in great terror that Randall should come in and accuse me of agitating Lucille. I did not want Lucille to be agitated. I did not want to listen to what she had to say. I wished most ardently that the boys had never gone upstairs to play at bears in a wood.

But Lucille held me fast, and said her say. She heard me utter words for the sound of which she had longed. She heard me promise that if—that if—what is the good of putting it down in black and white? Those who have ever looked at a woman they dearly love, knowing that her hour of trial draws near, can fill it up for themselves, and fancy just what I felt as I promised my brother's wife to stand by the boys—and the baby, if need be—"for ever and ever, Amen," as Dumphie was wont to say when he wanted to express an indefinite period of time.

When I got home after this trying interview, I went straight to my room without seeing Sister Charlotte.

She was so very astute, was Sister Charlotte! As Kexia put it, "It weren't no manner of use getting up ever so early in the morning to be even w' Miss Charlotte; you need to stop up all night." Those bright dark eyes of hers saw through everything. The languor of her weak and suffering body never touched them. Still,

on this occasion, I carried myself with subtlety. I bathed my red eyes with tepid water; I sat with my back to the light when I went down to the parlour. But my strategy was of no avail.

"Have you a cold in your head, Sister Dacie?" said the invalid, raising her eyes from her knitting, and giving me the benefit of their penetrating gaze.

"No—dear me! No," I answered, briskly, with the air of one who should say that such a thing as a cold in the head was an evil well-nigh unknown.

"Then you have been crying?"

Lying—even white lying—never comes easily to me. I should often get on better with—that is, I should often be able to adapt myself better to Sister Charlotte if it did.

So I answered by a snuffle, and lost sight of the bead I was supposed to be threading.

"What have you been crying for?"

When Sister Charlotte speaks in that tone I dare no more refuse to answer her than a shivering heretic, in the wicked old days when Christian persecution flourished, dared refuse to answer the Grand Inquisitor.

"I have been thinking something might happen to—Lucilla."

"Sister Dacie, you are a fool."

I did not dispute this assertion. I hadn't it in me to dispute anything. I sat and blinked at the fire, and pretended not to see that Kezia sniffed curiously as she brought the tea in. I was haunted by Lucille's looks, by Lucille's words.

"Her eyes looked like the eyes of a spirit," I thought, as I lifted the tea-pot lid and put in the regulation three spoonfuls—one for Sister Charlotte, one for myself, and one for the pot. How her voice shook, and what a smile came across her face—a smile that touched her eyes as well as her lips, as she said: "Married a year to-day!"

"Sister Dacie, you are putting the milk into the slop-basin!" cried a voice from the sofa; and Kezia, bringing in one solitary muffin, sniffed again, as who should say: "I may be in the dark now as to what's up with you, Miss Dacie, but I'll find out all about it in a bit, see if I don't."

Which of course she did; and she and I sat up talking it all over long after Sister Charlotte was safely asleep, with the rush-light burning in the basin.

And outside, the night grew dark and gusty, and the poplar-tree, swaying its head from side to side, shook off thick,

pattering showers of rain-drops against the window-panes, while the wind whistled and moaned, and raised the carpet underneath our feet like the waves of a mimic sea.

"Married a year to-day," I said, musingly; "and what a happy time it has been!"

"Ay," answered Kezia, "she's a brightsome cratur is Mrs. Randall; and it passes me, Miss Dacie, to think how this blessed house can ha' helt its head up among its neighbours wi'out them daft laddies comin' round about, and pokin' their blessed fingers into every pot and pan i' my kitchen, and teasin' old Poll, and fallin' up the stairs and down the steps, and all such-like doin's; to say nothin' of cheerin' up Miss Charlotte ever so, and puttin' some loife and sperrit into a crusty old curmudgeon like me. We're twice the folk, Miss Dacie, sin' we had them will-o'-the-bogs about the place, and shame be mine that I ca'ed 'em so when first Master Randall went a-courtin'. They be down-right blessin's in disguise, and naught else, them lads be. They've took ten year off you and Miss Charlotte, and that's all about it. An' ain't Master Dumpy the bragian sarpint of a boy neither for cheekiness? and don't he carry on loike as if he wur a born prince, and no less? Lord ha' mussy on us all this night! What be that?"

It was a sharp, ringing crash downstairs that disturbed the current of Kezia's chatter; and in a moment she and I were rushing downstairs, full of threats against some godless youth who had, doubtless, hurled a stone at the front parlour window.

No such midnight crime had, however, been perpetrated.

The noise which had startled us owned quite another origin; for there, flat on its face, lay the large portrait of my brother Randall, which now hung opposite Sister Charlotte's couch, and had hung in mother's bedroom, just above the little table where lay her Bible and the box that held all her "boy's" letters in the olden days.

The cord yet swung gently to and fro against the wall, vibrating from the sudden severance; for both rings had given way, and were snapped asunder.

I raised the picture tenderly; a sense of dread and of desecration coming over me as through the shivered glass my brother's boyish face—smiling, happy, débonnaire, as it had never been since that day when he kissed mother for the last time—looked at me.

"I'd best brush the splinters up—happen they'll get i' somebody's feet, else," said Kezia, and was at work with her dustpan and brush in double quick time. She seemed glad of an excuse not to meet my eyes; and I saw that she shook her head ominously, from time to time. Then, without word or comment, we went upstairs to bed; where for long I lay awake, listening to the sigh of the wind in the poplar-tree, and the patter of the rain upon the panes.

AN ARTIST'S SKETCHES IN CANADA.

II. MONTREAL AND QUEBEC.

OTTAWA may be the Capital of Canada, but Montreal is the Metropolis. Directly one steps out of the poor, mean station—shortly to be replaced by a magnificent edifice near the Windsor Hotel—this fact impresses itself upon the senses. Notre Dame Street, that with which the traveller makes first acquaintance, is neither imposing nor lovely, but it is full of active, energetic life; and as we proceed further into the city, evidences of prosperity and importance multiply.

At the same time, the "lions" of Montreal may easily be seen in a day; not because they are few or insignificant, but because they lie within a small circle.

We were told that we must hire a "hackman" to take us about, and, therefore, formed ideas of vast spaces to be traversed; but it would seem that Canadians, like Americans, do not care to walk when they can drive, and our knowledge of this idiosyncrasy, combined with the facts that the thermometer was below zero, and the streets ice-bound, determined us to walk, and take the consequences.

From an artistic point of view, there is nothing very special to run after in Montreal itself, and so, after having duly inspected the really fine public buildings—the Post Office, Merchant's Exchange, McGill College, amongst others; having done our duty to the churches—to Notre Dame, gaudy, but imposing, and built apparently on a slope; to the Church of the Gesù, vast and uninteresting; and to the New Catholic Cathedral, still in a state of infancy, so far as the interior is concerned, and looking none the more attractive with the wreck of a fancy-fair strewn about it—we started up the steep, slippery streets to Mont Royal.

A road winds round and round the hill to the summit; but we preferred the pilgrims' stairs, and were amply repaid for half an hour's rather toilsome struggle over ice and snow.

From between the stems of the pines a peerless panorama is seen of Montreal—its highly cultivated surroundings, the magnificent rivers, Ottawa and St. Lawrence, which here join—the latter crossed by the famous Victoria Bridge—and the vast world of forest stretching away as far as the eye can reach. The extreme beauty of the winter scene was heightened by a brilliant sunset, and our enjoyment of it was intensified by the fact that we were the solitary occupants of this lone plateau of tree-dotted snow, and, although but eight hundred feet above the busy city, in a world of absolute silence.

Montreal has the name of being one of the liveliest places on the American Continent. Society here, although, of course, largely bound up with commerce, does not allow the vision of the almighty dollar to obstruct its eye for enjoyment, and, during the winter months especially, frisks and gambols with an enthusiasm which would be deemed out of place in the neighbouring United States—skating, tobogganning, making long snow-shoe expeditions on moonlight nights, sleighing, dancing, and feasting. Already we saw in the shop-windows the prize design for the Ice Palace, to be built for the Carnival of 1889, and were told that if we had never seen the Montreal Ice Carnival, we did not know what fun and amusement meant.

But we imagine it would be impossible at any time to be dull and depressed in Montreal. There is a light and cheerfulness about sights and sounds, a buoyant freshness in the air of the wide streets and the numerous open spaces, which assert themselves potently, and which induce one to look at life with a cheerful eye. So it was with regret that we yielded to the demands of our limited time, and set our faces Quebecwards.

The six hours' journey between the two places transports us almost magically into quite a different world.

We jump from to-day into a distant past; we exchange the society of quick-moving, brisk-speaking, alert-looking contemporaries for a stage of shadows. Prose and reality give way to romance and history. Canada, young, lusty, and strong, is pushed aside for old France; for Quebec, although the Union Jack has

floated from her Citadel for one hundred and fifty years, is a piece of old France set in a framework of New World scenery; and, as Bayard Taylor says, although but seventy or eighty years older than New England, seems to be separated from it by a space of five hundred years.

Quebec is dead. There is nothing to be gained by softening down the truth. Her commerce is going to Montreal; her population, if not actually diminishing, is standing still. Yet there is a charm about Quebec possessed by no other city in America—a double charm, made up of exquisite natural beauty and the pathetic shadow of a stirring past.

The thermometer marked ten degrees below zero as we glided on our sleigh up snow-bound hills from the station to the "Saint Louis," Quebec's solitary hotel. We involuntarily spoke in whispers as we passed along the quiet streets, with their lines of quaint, old houses; the gaunt, dark walls of which stood out in striking contrast to the moonlit snow on their roofs, and simultaneously recalled a moonlight mid-winter passage, of long years before, along the quiet waterways of Venice.

The next morning, early, we were out on the esplanade below the Citadel. Before us—far below us—shone the beautiful river, out of which the last Allan liner of the season was slowly making her way to England. On the opposite shore, beyond the island of Orleans, which here breaks the course of the river, nestles Point Levi amidst her almost home-like scenery of park, field, and orchard. High up on our right rose the Citadel, with the "meteor flag" flapping against the staff as if shuddering with the intense cold. Behind us, in a small enclosure, was the monument which commemorates the two heroes, whose names naturally spring to the lips whenever Quebec is mentioned—the Frenchman, Montcalm, from old-world Nismes; the Englishman, Wolfe, from quiet Kentish Westerham—and inscribed: "Mortem virtus communem, famam historia, monumentum posteritas dedit."

Hard by the garden stands the huge timbered house which was formerly the residence of the French Governors of Quebec, whilst to our left rises the spire of one of the earliest French churches, and the majestic buildings of the Laval University. All around them is a confused jumble of old houses, with white casemented windows, carved doorways, and high roofs, descending by streets so steep that they are being

utilised by the youth of Quebec as tobogganing slides away down to the water's edge.

We make our way to the Citadel, along an old street, in which so unobtrusively does the present assert itself in the domain of the past, that, with but a slight effort of the imagination, we can people it with the shadows of a long-buried life: Montcalm, issuing from his head-quarters, in that lowly cottage opposite our hotel, now occupied by a gentleman who styles himself a "capillary and tonsorial artist;" sedan-chairs, with bewigged and furbelowed gallants and dames on their way to a stately reception at the Governor's house, or to some fashionable salon wherein, we may be sure, will be reproduced, on a small scale, the pomp and glitter of the Faubourg Saint Germain far away—for Quebec, under the French rule, was no mere rough settlement of soldiers and fur-traders, but a social centre of high-born French adventurers, who carried old France with them wherever they went—and white-gaitered grenadiers tumbling out of the now decrepit barrack buildings to answer the alarm bugle on the citadel.

As we mount the steep snow slope to the fortress entrance, we almost expect to be hailed with a "Qui va là!" but our guide is a smart sergeant of the Canadian Artillery, which now garrison the place instead of the Queen's troops, and a very intelligent guide he turns out to be. We pass through a "curtain" of the fortifications, which strangely reminds us of a corner in the old feudal citadel of Yedo, in Japan, and are in the barrack-square, where a squad of Artillerymen are performing manœuvres to the notes of a brisk bugle band. We note the solitary piece of cannon captured at Bunker's Hill; proceed to the saluting battery, whence a glorious view of Quebec and the country round is gained; and our inspection of the Citadel is completed.

The afternoon we devote to the pet lion of Quebec—the drive to the famous Falls of Montmorenci. So completely wrapped up in furs as to be hardly recognisable as human beings, we rattle away in our sleigh up the broad road which leads out of the city; by the gate, restored upon the old lines under the auspices of the Princess Louise; past the huge drill shed; and, turning sharply to the left, are soon on historic ground. These are the heights of Abraham, and here it was on the fourteenth of September, 1759, that Montcalm was driven from the strong position he had fortified to give

battle to Wolfe and his Englishmen, who had scaled the heights, quietly and unseen, under cover of the darkness of the preceding night. A plain column, surmounted by a military trophy, and bearing the simple inscription: "Here died Wolfe, victorious," commemorates one of the most familiar incidents of British history; but in the quiet, snow-wrapped scene around there is nothing else to remind us of the terrible fighting of that fateful day, which gave Canada to Great Britain.

Our sleigh rattles away again. We pass through the very heart of the French suburban quarter of the city, with French sights and sounds on every side; cross the ice-bound Saint Charles River; and are in the open country. For eight miles we speed along in the keen but exhilarating air, which seems to defy all attempts on the part of fur cap, fur collar, and woollen gloves to keep it out; our bells ringing gaily; and our vehicle running as smoothly over the hard snow as on ice. Through hamlet after hamlet we dash; each one a picture of old French life in itself, with French "auberges," French shop-signs, and French figures dotted about everywhere.

Finally, we pull up at the village of Montmorenci—the scene of the battle fought by Wolfe immediately before the capture of Quebec—and, after paying a small fee for the privilege of crossing private grounds, make the best of our way along a faint path cut in the deep snow to the Falls.

We saw Montmorenci Falls under what we considered to be peculiarly fitting circumstances. The winter day was just waning into evening, and in the strange, grey, uncertain light there was something almost weird and ghostly in the appearance of this white-robed, gently falling river, with the soft French name, with the dark woods clustering down to its very edge, and the dark sky above, yet faintly tinged with the last red streaks of a glowing sunset. There is no turmoil, and roar of mighty pent-up strength here. The waters seem to sink quietly over the two hundred and fifty feet of sheer precipice into the abyss below, and the effect on the spectator is soothing and pleasing rather than awe-inspiring. But they only seem to sink quietly; for that rising sheet of spray, and those great snow billows, on either side, speak of mighty force which, but for the chain of hard frost which binds Nature, would change the scene to one of

terrible grandeur. These billows of snow, which clothe the rocks on either side of the Fall, are a striking feature in the scene, for they are literally water frozen in the act of falling, so that the cascade, seen as we saw it in mid-winter, is but a tithe of its volume in summer time.

Some idea of the intensity of the cold in these regions may be gleaned from the fact, that, during the months of January and February, the spray of the Fall is frozen into a solid mass of ice, which so slopes that the Quebec people come out in hundreds to use it as a tobogganing slide, starting from the summit and speeding far away down on to the river Saint Lawrence below.

We came to see Canada under its winter aspect. At Montmorenci, on this quiet, cold evening, we for the first time approximately realised what the awful solitude of Nature must have been in these north-west regions ere man arrived to establish his empire amongst them.

Save the towers—which had once supported a bridge over the Falls, and which fell, carrying with it a luckless peasant and his family—a hut or two, and the stair-way leading to the foot of the Falls, there was absolutely nothing here to remind one of the existence of man. The dark masses of pine and juniper; the white outline of the cascade; the deep, white snow on all sides; and the magnificent panorama through which the broad river wound on its way to Quebec—all were wrapped in utter silence. The scene impressed us far more vividly than if we had viewed it under the influence of summer sunshine; and we no longer wondered that the poor Indian mind of old days could only see in such works of Nature the semblance of a dread Spirit.

The evening drive back to Quebec through the villages, now active and animated with the return of the toilers from the city lumber-yards; with groups of children coming out of school, chattering in voluble French; and with the arrival of old-world mail-coach sleighs; was very pleasant, and we turned into our hotel thoroughly well pleased with our day in Quebec.

We found the hall of the hotel full of men, and learned that the Canadian hotel hall is regarded as a sort of club or rendezvous for the lovers of gossip and news: any one who chooses walking in and out, greeting his acquaintances, smoking his cigar and patronising the

liquor-bar without let or hindrance. We were the only tourists about, the company being made up of local residents, commercial travellers, and the members of a Boston troupe of strolling players, who were vehemently discussing the behaviour of a certain section of the Quebec jeunesse dorée which had behaved uproariously during the performance of the previous evening.

In only one thing were we disappointed during our stay in Quebec, and this was our inability to see the "noble savage." At Lake Saint John, a day's journey from Quebec in a north-westerly direction, he may be seen in something nearly approaching his original condition, especially about Chicoutimi and Ha Ha Bay; but we were told that during the winter months whole families are away, engaged in fur-getting and sealing operations, and that probably we should only be rewarded for our long journey by the sight of a few squaws and "papoosees." Moreover, the railway has invaded their territory, and is working its usual changes amongst them, slowly but surely; whilst the annually increasing number of sportsmen and tourists who flock to the neighbourhood of the Saguenay River, will soon lead to the establishment of hotels and accessories of civilisation in the very midst of Indian territory. Indeed, although the Huron Indians of Lake Sa'nt John still live in wigwams, and cling to the feather and bead costume of romance, as well as to the old ceremonies and customs—especially those attending the induction of a "brave"—we were assured that every season sees some modification on their part of old ideas in favour of the new order of things, so that before many years are past they will resemble their brethren at Oka on the Ottawa River, who, although proud of the old poetic names of Iroquois and Algonquin, are not above wearing the hats and breeches of prosaic Eastern civilisation, nor of living in houses; and who are as keen in their curio transactions as the more practised purveyors of the Old World.

The old Quebec of the French quarter is very attractive to the artist, and at every turn of the ever-turning streets he will find a "bit" for his pencil, whether a type from the people themselves, or a street corner, or a group of old houses. "Break-neck Stairs" is a characteristic specimen, so are the collections of buildings on the quay-side; and as no new broom has ever swept with permanent results through

the old city, it is not likely now that in its decadence it will materially alter.

One strange effect of climate on the people we noticed, and this was, that with his French language, his French habits of life, and his French associations, the Quebec man is rather a silent and reserved individual—not at all addicted to the frivolity and chatter typical of his race, but seeming to preserve in his own marked idiosyncrasies some trace of the care and anxiety which must have hardened and sobered his hardy forefathers, the first pioneers to this wild region. He is loyal to the backbone, and is a determined opponent to the scheme now much talked of in the circles of agitators and malcontents, of annexation to the United States. Another curious characteristic is his contempt for the France and the French of to-day, his emphatic lament over the degeneracy of his race over the Atlantic, and his sturdy conservatism in the matter of old feudal institutions, his reverence for noble blood and the preservation of the old French language.

We could profitably have spent a much longer time in and about Quebec, but the Almanac was inexorable; and so, with great regret we left the fair old city, and its picturesque, Old World life, and were soon again in the very vortex of the dollar-hunting world of the States.

AUTHORSHIP: PAST AND PRESENT.

IN his terrible book on "The Calamities of Authors," Disraeli the elder has this curious sentence: "Of all the sorrows in which the female character may participate, there are few more affecting than that of an authoress."

These words strike the key-note of the entire book. It is one of the most doleful jeremiads ever penned. Would that we could say that it is also one of the most unjustifiable. There is certainly reason enough in it; though there is less than there seems to be. And yet it is much less applicable to our age than to any previous age.

Do but think how, with the spread of elementary education, and the growth of the press, the field for writers has been enlarged since Isaac Disraeli's time. Then there is the vast increase of population, at home and abroad, all crying out for food spiritual. And, notwithstanding intermittent periods of bad trade, and hard times,

there has been steady addition to the balances in the banks, upon which the purchase of luxuries, whether books or diamond bracelets, mainly depends.

The author's chances have necessarily multiplied in like manner. He need no longer take up his burden with the assurance, on all sides of him, and from his monitor within, that he has saddled himself with an incubus that must either slay him prematurely after grievous sufferings, or curse his length of days, so that he shall again and again sigh for the peace and rest of the tomb. It may even be doubted if the number of aspirants for literary bread, or champagne (as the case may prove), has increased much in excess of their opportunities. And indubitably one must now be either a monstrous dull pedant, or a singular trifler, to suffer the fate of the brilliant, luckless "Orator Henley," who left at his death six thousand manuscripts, all unpublished, valued at a guinea apiece by the writer, as a reproach to a world that treated him but scurvily. Alas, for the poor man's skill as an appraiser of literary wares! The six thousand manuscripts were sold posthumously for less than a hundred pounds; and, to the bargain of the manuscripts, one hundred and fifty volumes of memoranda were added!

Our age is, above all things, a sensible one. Of old, we were ignorant enough to be rash—in wars, dynastic affairs, personal interests, and callings. But the nation would, nowadays, reason away the need for such a campaign as Pitt counselled us into; and would weigh well a King's head against a Puritan Commonwealth before sacrificing the one to the other. And it is the same with individuals. Whereas, for example, our forefathers married when nature suggested the idea to them, and never bruited the fancy that men and women might live apart from each other; we coldly hold our destined brides aloof, or view them under the microscope until convinced that they have many more defects than are apparent to the naked eye, and that these failings are not conducive to our comfort; or we suddenly realise that marriage is a failure, and that we are under no imperative responsibility to provide sons for our estates and our country.

In our choice of a calling, we are likewise very judicious and discreet. The odds are that we are also a little obstinate; but it is an obstinacy the outcome of our discretion rather than of unenlightened prejudice. If, for example, our sire—good

honest man, a score and a half of years behind the times—sets us in a groove for one profession, ten to one we soon inform him that it is just the profession of all others for which we are unfitted. Nor is it anything to the point that, had he placed us in a different groove, this despised profession would then have attracted us irresistibly.

It is to this lack of perception in the parent that so many votaries of literature may trace their liaison with a profession, which they cannot lightly decline after a few hard and bitter years of apprenticeship. The wise father should take his bright and hopeful son by the arm ere his inclinations have stiffened in one direction; should guide his steps towards the radiant Mount of Parnassus; discuss with him the substantial glory that attends upon literary fame; point to the immortal quartos and duodecimos upon his bookshelves; and ply him yearningly with the "tu quoque" suggestion—should, in fine, offer him a meagre but adequate allowance for a term of years, during which he should pledge himself to do naught but seek reputation and pelf at the hands of the publishers. The stripling will not hesitate, in such a case, to turn his back upon Parnassus. And the gladsome sire may, by-and-by, thank his wit that the boy has grown into a portly broker, with balances at two or three different banks; or into an eloquent Q.C., whose working minutes are worth a sovereign apiece.

But I am going astray in my argument. I would fain assert the reasonableness of the literary profession in these happy days, and not the imprudence of it. You see, established opinion is so strong, that it controls even the bias of the mind. All the world will have it that the worker in Grub Street goes to his ruin. And so even I, who urge that this is now far from being the case, am disposed to think that the wise father will act wisely if he diverts his boy's brilliant gifts into any channel rather than the narrow straits of literature.

Granted, then, that the youth or maiden with a tendency towards literature be intelligent, stupendously industrious, able to concentrate, patient of what may seem to be slights and injuries the most cruel and unnecessary, and willing to endure all else that may befall him or her in the pursuit of literary success—granting this, there is a goal to be striven for and attained.

In the time of the Herons, and Dennises, and Harveys, it was otherwise. The one

or two geniuses of the age sat on a throne, and all the others knelt at their feet in abject adoration, or said behind their backs those bitter things, the utterance of which spleen and failure never fail to prompt in seasons of depression. Vain was it for these hapless ones to expend their lives in a too-zealous endeavour for recognition. They might work their fourteen hours a day, for weeks and months, without intermission, heaping up manuscript to no purpose. Sooner or later the body gave way, or the mind, or both; they had but just time to repine about an ungrateful world, the miseries of authorship, and the stony hearts of the publishers, and then their troubles were over, and nothing remained of them, save the hard-wrought, imperfect book, which might or might not get printed, but would in nine cases out of ten remain unread.

It is in our breadth of scope, also, that we are far more blessed than these our luckless predecessors. In days when it was a feat of locomotion to travel to town, the mind of the average man was like to be as homely as his surroundings.

The master intellects could then, as ever, surmount time and space, and revel in the pure empyrean of Fancy, self-nurtured, and self-sustained. But the majority of those who were caught in the web of literary ambition, could only dig and delve among the writings of the ancients, and produce huge windy commentaries, terrible to contemplate. No divine creative breath ever had the chance to fertilise into activity what atoms of true original power lay sighing for expression in their tormented brains, and beneath a scholastic and antiquarian dust that day by day thickened within them. As the years fled on, life took inevitably the colour of their own wretchedness. The blue skies, the breezy mountain-tops, the sparkling streams, and the green fields, were nothing to them. They had never sacrificed to Nature. In their hours of need Nature had nothing of comfort to say to them.

On the other hand, consider how we are privileged. Not only do foreign lands—which have, indeed, become much less “foreign” than of yore—give us an inexhaustible material for literary wares, but they also offer us a tonic which is at least as valuable for mind as body.

What can be easier for the brain-sick scribbler than to take a ticket for Switzerland or Norway, and to go across the

water to recuperate? New impressions make their mark upon him at once. But their very novelty is a refreshment. And so his medicine cures and nourishes him at the same time.

Formerly, the poor student, with the fever of fame in his veins, travelled one road and none other. He was the most helpless, the most ridiculous of mortals outside his Grub Street attic: a laughing-stock for street urchins, and a prey to all the rogues who were fortunate enough to know him in his brief hours of prosperity. Of the passions of life—save the one to which he had sacrificed all the others—he knew little or nothing by experience. He could write you a very correct love-ditty, in which Daphne and Phyllis trifled with each other's feelings in quite a statuesque manner. But he could no more declare his passion for a woman of flesh and blood like himself, than he could threaten to King's Bench a publisher who owed him a dozen crowns and preferred to keep him tarrying for the money.

His was the existence, in truth, of a shadow. He sat in Plato's cave with his back to the light, and saw mirrored on the wall before him the doings of other men. But the mischief of it was, that though he lived the life of a shadow, he had all the aspirations of those others whose bustling movements were ever before his eyes. He could have laughed as they laughed, and have loved like them, if only he had been content to live like them. As it was, however, this consciousness of latent ability and actual incapacity was but another ingredient in the cup of misery which he was compelled to quaff.

Vastly, indeed, are we, in this particular, superior to him. The novelist of our day is the very pulse of his contemporaries. He lives their life more deeply, and with a fuller consciousness, than they live it themselves. In no situation need he stand perplexed. He is passionate, pathetic, and humorous by turns, because he has, wittingly or not, strongly suffered, loved, and laughed in his journey through life. Love, especially, he has studied; and he colours his stories with as many tints as there are diverse peoples on the globe. Each foreign land serves him as a new stage upon which to set his beloved puppets in action.

Moreover, if the typical inhabitant of Grub Street was among the most guileless and simple of men—so that the undiscerning might well take him for a fool—the modern writer, of the typical kind, may be

said to be so much an adept in experimental roguery and psychical wickedness, that it ought to be easier to outwit a police detective than him—the creator alike of detectives and tricks of sin which baffle the ingenuity of detectives.

Another thing. We, in our day, esteem the divine afflatus of inspiration of less consequence than did our friends of Grub Street. Ours is a rational age, and therefore, perhaps, rather an irreverent one. If, as might be argued, inspiration is a gift—mournfully spasmodic in its visitations—which seldom travels except attended, before or after, by empty stomachs, bodily languishing, patched clothes, and the spleen, we are well quit of it. Certain it is that they who prated most about the need of inspiration and the wonders they worked under its guidance, were only too often, in their latter days, a sad warning to others to shun inspiration as they would a plague-stricken person.

Listen to Dennis on the subject :

"Genius is caused by a furious joy and pride of soul on the conception of an extraordinary hint. Many men have their hints without their motions of fury and pride of soul, because they want fire enough to agitate their spirits; and these we call cold writers. Others, who have a great deal of fire, but have not excellent organs, feel the fore-mentioned motions, without the extraordinary hints; and these we call fustian writers."

You see, it was a great responsibility to claim to be inspired when Dennis was alive. He was so sure of his own inspiration, and so shrewd a critic, that he could not but have denounced you to your fellow-men—had you been so injudicious as to print and send him a copy of your book—as either a cold or a fustian writer. Spite of all, the poor fellow could not keep himself from wretchedness of the most pitiable kind. In his old age, when he was blind, he lived on the alms he received from the men whom he was so hot to prove were puny and contemptible writers.

I need hardly remark that "furious joy" of this uncomfortable kind is quite out of fashion now. If a discreet writer of mature judgment does, in a moment of "furious joy" and "pride of soul," chance to conceive an acceptable hint, he makes a note of it. But he allows the "furious joy" wholly to subside before he reviews the hint, and turns it over to see what it looks like. Even then he makes the examination in a very suspicious way. He

does not like the manner of the bantling's birth. To him it argues a weakness somewhere, and he is quite prepared to discover that it has a constitutional defect which will prevent it maturing.

No; let Dennis have his genius and spasmodic inspiration, so we are not deprived of the permanent faculties of industry and observation to which we look as our literary tools. Of course, it is not unpleasing to us to hear others talk of our "genius" and the "inspired" nature of our work; nor do we contradict or argue with them on their misuse of terms in such a case. But, none the less, it is a law of our literary code that "no man shall," with impunity, mention himself and the word "genius" in the same breath, or as synonymous expressions. "Genius" may indeed be said to be superseded by the mysterious alliteration "cobbler's wax." The most excellent works of imagination are begotten of nothing in the world else than "cobbler's wax" and a note-book.

But to revert to what I may call my text—the passage with which I have opened this paper. What Disraeli here says of authoresses may have been more or less true when he wrote it. Happily, in the year of grace 1889, it is infinitely less true. The privilege of signing herself "Authoress," a sorrow the most affecting to the female character! Forsooth, "sorrow" must now have quite another signification to what it had then, ere this be justified.

Our century has been—as we all know to the degree of tedium—a century of singular progress, change, or whatever you please to call it. But, to my mind, even the invention of steam-engines and electric-machines is not so remarkable a characteristic of it, as the alteration in their ideals and attitude towards life and mankind of women. This will surely go as far to revolutionise society, as steam and telegraph in their effect upon commerce and international politics. And in no particular is the revolution more strongly foreshadowed than in the prevailing multitude of women who, by means of their pens, disseminate the influence of their minds over all the civilised parts of the globe.

To us, of the other sex, this change may not be acceptable; nevertheless, we must accept and reckon with it.

To women themselves, however, it cannot but be very agreeable. They have long held the empire of the hearth. Let

us see, or rather let our children see, what is the outcome of their participation in, if not usurpation of, the control of the various other reins by which that mysterious biped, Mankind, is guided in the direction of order.

It may, I think, be assumed, that if the profession of authorship were as grievous a one for woman as Disraeli conceived it to be, it would be followed but scantily, be the pressure of existence ever so hard. The humble seamstress toils long hours daily for a pittance; but at least she need have few mental anxieties. The writer, on the other hand, is daily hedged with trouble. Her mind is in travail at the same time that she is toiling with no assurance that her toil will meet with any reward.

And yet how stands the case? In any published list of novels—to take the most typical branch of literature—what is the proportion of woman's work to man's? Seldom less than as two to one, and often as much as five to one.

Nor can this fact be mitigated by the stock charge against our women novelists that they are incompetent, inartistic, and even pernicious, and that their success is explained by the imperfection of our nature, which enables us to appreciate what is mediocre rather than what is admirable.

There are iniquitous authoresses as there are iniquitous authors, whether their iniquity be of art or morals. But excellence abounds more than iniquity, and therefore merits the more notice.

Such names as George Eliot, Elizabeth Browning, Mrs. Gaskell, and — not, to slight the present decade—Mrs. Burnett and Edna Lyall, cover a multitude of inefficiencies in the rank and file of those of their own profession and sex. Are such women fit objects for the pity so gallantly tendered by Disraeli towards them and all like them? I should rejoice to have their own individual replies to this question.

Perhaps it will be demurred further that such fame and recognition as these authoresses received does not atone for the toil itself. Well, in these days we give money-bags with our laurel wreaths to those whom the people delight to honour. If thousands of pounds sterling, in addition to the applause of tens of thousands of their fellow beings, cannot atone to the artist for the work of her ingenuity, then Art and her sister Literature are a pair of monstrous fetishes, instead of the benign abstractions they are supposed to be; and it were well

to expel them for ever from the category of human influences.

The truth is, that what was good advice and reasonable sympathy in 1812, is obsolete, both as advice and sympathy, in 1889. Women have their field now as they had not then. Yearly, they are more at home in it. They know, quite as well as Disraeli knew, that the sorrows of ineffectual authorship are bitter to bear, whether for men or women. But, thanks to the changed times, they know more also. They are quick to perceive that nothing worth having is to be had without serious and even grievous effort; and they thoroughly realise that here, the end, when reached, compensates for the pains and penalties endured in the quest of it.

A SIMNEL CHARM.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"DEBORAH, can you make a Simnel cake?"

The old woman regarded her questioner with surprise.

"Mak' a Simnel, Miss Nina? Ay, I reckon I'd be shamt o' mysen if I couldna; an' a real owd Bury Simnel, too, boiled and baked, an' wi' saffron, an' maybe wi' a charm. But folk nowadays think theirs a sight too grand fur to need charms."

The two were standing in the kitchen of the Mill Farm, an old-fashioned kitchen with a stone floor, and whitewashed walls ornamented with shining pots and pans. The door was wide open, letting in a flood of sunshine. Through the doorway one caught a glimpse of the farmyard; the river beyond, with the little foot-bridge; and the mill, a cloud of spray rising from the water-wheel, that splashed and thundered, filling the air with a murmurous drone, above which one heard the chirping and twittering of birds. Across the river lay broad meadows, starred with celandines, and yet further, thick woods, the leafless trees standing out darkly against the blue.

"Charms, Deborah?" repeated Nina, looking over the green fields with serious grey eyes, while a sunbeam entangled itself in the brown meshes of her hair, and turned it to gold. "What sort of charms?"

"Love-charms, o' course. Eh, many's th' lass I've known put a charm in th' Simnel cake, if th' lad as hoo'd set her heart on wouldna' speak. I mind puttin'

a charm i' a Simnel cake fur to mak' Matt Thompson oppen his mouth. I'd been walkin' out wi' him nigh on three year, an' I thowt it wur about toime to talk o' gettin' wed. So I made a couple o' Simnels, an' put th' charm i' th' smallest, an' set off whoam. I wur stayin' wi' an uncle then. It wur a Saturday afternoon, an' I met Matt at the first stile. 'I'm takin' mother a Simnel,' I says, 'and I've made another for thee. I'll give thee a bit now.' Wi' that, I broke a bit off. He took and ate it, an' says, 'Lass, tha's a graidly hond at Simnels. This here's a grand un. Let's ha' it fur a weddin' cake; it'll keep three week. We'll get parson to put up th' askin's to-morrow.' Ay, that wur a quick charm, sure enow."

"And what was the charm?"

"Tha takes a bit o' fern-root that has th' black mark in it—the mun pull it at th' new moon—an' two white beans an' one black one—tha mun choose 'em at th' full moon—an' grind 'em all to powder, an' stir it into th' cake. When once th' charm is i' the cake, thee's nowt more to do but to moind as tha's th' first woman to give th' lad a slice on't. It dunnot matter who gives it to him afterwards—it's the first woman. Tha sees?"

"I understand."

"Ay, it's a good charm," repeated Deborah, pausing, with uplifted rolling-pin. "I dunnot know a better."

The inner door opened, and a pretty, dark-haired girl put her head into the kitchen.

"Deborah, you wicked old woman! Why didn't you tell me that charm? I might have used it. I've heard every word; it's a lovely charm!"

"Eh, Miss Molly, th' lad coom quick enow wi'out anything o' that sort," and a smile stole over the old woman's face.

"Would you like to make the experiment on anybody, Nina dear?"

Nina Croft blushed. It was a very faint, fleeting, wild-rose blush, but still it was there, and did not escape her friend's amused eyes.

"I could not make the Simnel," she said.

"Oh, yes, you could, under Deborah's superintendence. We will make one each, you and I, and Deborah shall make a third—a big one—for the household, as she always does. Our little Simnels," with a significant nod, "we will dispose of as we think fit. There is plenty of time to gather the charm materials. This week is new moon, and before mid-Lent Sunday there will be a full moon; so——"

"Wheer's th' cranberries fur th' tart?" enquired Deborah, looking up from her pastry.

"The cranberries? I forgot them." Molly disappeared, and returned with a large brown jar full of the bright red fruit.

"These are the last," she said, setting down the jar. "Nina, will you come out with me? Mother is in the Robin field, looking at the new Alderney Frank has given her. Come and choose it a name."

Mrs. Rushton had been left a widow, with an insufficient income and one daughter—Molly. Of course, relatives and unthinking friends had solved for her the problem of how to live by glibly observing that there was enough for herself, and Molly must teach. It is always so easy to assume that every girl has an inborn talent for teaching. But Molly declared she "could teach nothing, she was positive." She "hated the idea; besides, she knew nothing either. Also, she would not leave her mother." And as for Mrs. Rushton, no wonder the poor soul shrank from a lonely life in lodgings. At last, after much thought, mother and daughter decided upon taking the Mill Farm, and becoming "farmeresses," as Molly remarked. By letting most of the meadow-land they reduced the farm to manageable dimensions. Their little income paid the rent. They wisely did not attempt to grow cereals, but confined themselves to eggs and poultry, milk and butter, fruit and vegetables; things that found ready sale in the manufacturing town of Yale, four miles away. Wealthy people in the town, who had known Molly's father, made a point of purchasing direct from the Mill Farm. So the Rushtons led a busy and happy life in the fresh air and the smiling country; a life infinitely better for both than toil of teaching for the one, and weary solitude for the other.

"Of course," said Molly, to her school-friend Nina, "I cannot afford frocks to go to entertainments, so I never go anywhere. But old friends often come to see us, particularly in summer. We are not at all dull; and there is so much to do, that the days seem to fly."

This was Nina's first visit to the Mill Farm. Her stepmother had joyfully assented to her spending three months with Molly Rushton; for Mrs. Croft intended going abroad for that period, and had no great wish to take her stepdaughter with her. To the town-bred girl every-

thing was new and delightful; and Molly had wonderful news for her when she arrived. Did Nina recollect Frank Hope? He used to come to their house in Yale in the old days. He was a mill-owner. Surely Nina must remember him; he was such a dear fellow, and so good-looking. Well, Nina must be her bridesmaid. They were to be married in the summer.

"And your mother? Will she leave the farm?" enquired Nina.

"Oh no; she says she has grown fond of it, and it gives her occupation. I shall not be far away from her, for we shall live at Yale. I dare say she will have a cousin of mine to live with her when I am gone; but nothing is settled yet."

Her future being so happily assured, Molly Rushton had no need of the Simnel charm. In truth, she thought no more about it. It lingered, however, in Nina's mind. Charms were mere silly superstition, she told herself. Nevertheless, when a silver crescent shone in the blue, somebody pulled up a root of the brown, withered bracken in the garden hedge. The fern grew by the little white gate through which Dr. Octavius Burnley had passed so often lately, in attendance on Mrs. Rushton, who had sprained her foot. The foot was well now; and Molly and her mother rejoiced. So did Nina in sympathy; yet she missed Dr. Burnley's visits. He had seemed to linger; and once or twice had found time to stroll round the meadows with the two girls. He was a young man, and was in partnership with old Dr. Maraland, of Yale. So Molly said, adding that he was "a great friend of Frank's."

The crescent moon waxed, and the March sunshine brought out the blossom of the blackthorn, and strewed yellow celandines so thickly over the home meadow that, in spots near the river, the green was almost hidden by the gold. Here and there pinky white anemones ventured to open their fragile petals, while the palm-willows spread silvery white catkins, to tell the world that winter was over and Easter near. The foot-path through the fields led to an old-fashioned stile at the edge of the woods, and near it the first primroses always grew. One sunny afternoon, in the middle of the month, Nina discovered a great cluster of them, like a patch of brighter sunshine. She was stooping to pluck them, when Dr. Burnley's voice startled her.

"Have I frightened you?" he said. "I

am so sorry. I suppose you were so absorbed with your primroses that you did not hear me coming? I take this short cut twice a day now, unless it rains, when I drive round by the road, so don't mistake me for a poacher when you meet me in the woods."

"I don't go in the woods," replied Nina, "only about the meadows, when Molly is busy. I am never tired of admiring this place. It grows prettier every day."

From where they stood the fields stretched green and golden to the shining river; the blackthorn was white in the hedges; the red roof of the farmhouse stood out against the blue of the sky.

"Green, and gold, and white—those are the colours of early spring," said Burnley, looking, however, not around, but at his companion. "If you will come a little way with me, I will find you some more primroses. I saw them yesterday."

They turned down a path to the right, skirting the woods—a path partly overhung by larches, on whose swinging branches birds perched, and sang of the coming summer. Then the ground dipped, and in a grassy, ferny hollow were hundreds of the beautiful blossoms.

"They 'make a sunshine in the shady place,' like Una's hair, don't they?" said Burnley. "Now you cannot possibly want all of them. Give me a few for myself. Have I not earned them?" This when Nina was primrose-laden.

She gave him a small bunch, telling him that all the rest were needed to ornament the farm parlour.

"In honour of Simnel Sunday?" he enquired. "Do you know Miss Rushton has invited me to come in after church with Hope, and eat Simnel according to custom? As I shall do that at about twenty or thirty houses during the day, I expect to be very ill on Monday."

He walked back to the stile with her, and then said good-bye.

"I have not time to run in at the farm; pray make my excuses. I must hurry off to the Hall. Old Mr. Fulshaw is ninety-two, and they expect me to cure him. I wish I could; but I'm afraid nothing but the elixir of youth could do that, and I don't possess it."

He disappeared among the trees, and Nina returned to the farm, and astonished Molly with the primroses.

"How lovely! How nice of Dr. Burnley to tell you where to find them! Mother, do you hear?"

"Yes, my dear. Poor Mr. Fulshaw! But really ninety-two is a great age. Deborah heard that they kept Dr. Burnley there till nearly eleven a few nights ago. I hope he does not take that short cut through the woods at night. I'm sure it is not safe with so many poachers about."

"Why, mother, poachers would not harm a doctor."

"Not intentionally, my dear; but they might mistake him for a keeper. Or, there might be shooting going on—a fight, I mean."

"Well, he would not take part in it," said Molly, laughing.

"Of course not; but one never knows whom those shots may hit. I confess I am dreadfully alarmed at poachers."

"Be comforted, mother; they won't 'burgle' the Mill Farm. And as for Dr. Burnley, he is quite safe, I am certain. Don't look so scared, Nina. I assure you if the man-in-the-moon had been a poacher, mother would picture him attacking the back-door with dog and sticks."

The man-in-the-moon! The moon was at the full that night, and all the evening Nina hesitated as to whether she should add the rest of the charm to that half-inch of fern-root that was lying in her dressing-case. Finally, when the household retired, she decided that of course she would not be so silly. Nevertheless, she sat up reading till the tall old clock downstairs droned eleven, and the moon was high above the farmhouse chimneys.

Nina drew aside the curtain and looked out. The night was very clear; the river, the meadows, the dark woods, were all bathed in the white glory of the moonlight. Half the farmyard was in the light, half in the dark shadows cast by the stables and barns, which were built at right angles with the house. Just below Nina's window, Turk, the mastiff, slumbered in his kennel beside the kitchen door. The dog knew her; she could pass him easily enough.

Mrs. Rushton and Molly slept at the front of the house; they would not be likely to hear her creep down these queer little back-stairs. And as for Deborah, certainly the old woman's room was near; but doubtless she would be tired, and would sleep soundly.

For Nina was half ashamed of her wish to try the charm. No one must know. Then she hesitated again; she would not get the beans. Yet, there was the granary, with its outside flight of wooden steps, just opposite Turk's kennel. How easy it would be to get a handful of beans out of the big

sack inside the door! Nina made up her mind, put on a warm jacket and little fur cap—for March nights are chilly, however mild the month may be—and stepped like a mouse down the stairs leading to the kitchen. The back-door was secured by an iron bar, and also by a primitive hook and key. However, she contrived to undo all three fastenings with very slight noise.

Turk came out of his kennel, yawned, and slowly wagged his tail in recognition. Nina patted his head, ran across the moonlit yard, and up the granary steps. The door was locked; but the key always hung in the kitchen, and she had taken it as she passed through. In another minute she had a handful of the beans, and was selecting the magic three by the moonlight when a shot, followed by several more, broke the stillness of the night. Mrs. Rushton's words flashed into the girl's mind. Poachers! Yes, of course; and the gamekeepers had caught them. Surely there was no danger for—anybody else! It was not probable that he would stay so late at the Hall. Besides, they would not harm him. Nina stood by the granary door, straining her eyes across the two fields that separated the river from the woods. From the height of the steps she could see every yard of the way, from the footbridge to the stile—a low one with one bar. Over this a man stumbled, then fell in the short grass. She clasped her hands in horror, and the beans rolled with a faint rattle into the yard. She did not hear them—had forgotten them, in fact. Who was the man lying yonder? A wounded poacher, or keeper; or—Dr. Burnley? If a poacher, why did not his companions come to his assistance? Perhaps he was a solitary keeper? She must rouse the house and get help in any case; but for the moment she felt powerless to stir. Everything seemed so strangely unreal; the white night, the black, fantastic shadows, the soft lapping of the river, that prostrate figure lying in the moonlight. He raised himself, and crawled a few paces, then sank again. At that distance it was not possible to recognise him; but a terrible conviction came to Nina. Rushing down the steps, she unchained Turk; and bidding the dog follow her, ran over the little bridge, along the path, and found—as she instinctively knew she should—Octavius Burnley.

"An' a foina doment it wur," said old

Deborah to the miller one warm morning two months later. "When Miss Nina coom rushin' back an' rousin' us a' oop, eh! yo' might ha' knocked me down wi' a hay-wisp, so to speak. An' me runnin' down to th' mill to wake ye a' oop fur to fetch th' doctor fro' th' field to th' house—I mun say yo' were pretty quick."

"Oh, ay," returned the miller, "I reckon we didna stop to curl our hair. I'm reest down glad them poachin' chaps wur caught. It's a foinie thing to be lettin' fly at keepers, an' hittin' a mon walkin' quietly whoam. They hannot ought to ha' guns at a', but if they mun fire at keepers, let 'em hit 'em, I say, an' not go pepperin' folk as ha' nowt to do wi' th' roompus. It isna fair! Eh dear, an' it wur owd Fulshaw's doin' in a way. He wur nobbut a poor moitherin' chap a' his loife, an' he couldna even dee wi'out makin' a bother. If he hadna kept Doctor Burnley that late, nowt would ha' happent. However, it's coom a' reet. He mun be gettin' well, as he's goin' whoam to Yale, to-morrow. 'Tis a long toime, though. Th' blackthorn wur white then, an' now th' apple-blossom is a' pink ivverywhere. But if a man mun be ill, th' Mill Farm isna a bad place, wi' a sweet-heart to help i' th' nussing." Deborah nodded.

"It wur that Simnel charm o' mine as saved him; fur if Miss Nina hadna gone fur th' beans, th' doctor would ha' lain theer i' th' meadow an' deed. Ay, it wur a good charm!"

That was a year ago. The Mill Farm remains unaltered; but some of its inmates are flown. Nina Croft has changed her name to Burnley, and lives at Yale, near her friend Molly, now Mrs. Hope, who laughingly maintains the undoubted efficacy of the Simnel charm.

"But we did not make the cakes," says Nina, "only Deborah made one. We forgot."

"Oh, that's nothing," retorts Molly. "Your intentions were to brew the charm."

Then, imitating Deborah, she adds, "Eh, but it wur a good charm!"

FRUIT UNDER THE HAMMER.

WHILE snow is gently falling, and roofs and piazzas are outlined in a thin white film, and a gleam of sunshine struggles through the wintry haze, giving here and there a glowing touch to the

scene below, Covent Garden, both new and old, is revealed to the passer-by. The old is outlined in the snow: the features of an earlier Covent Garden, not utterly changed, although constantly changing; but that might still be recognised by remnants of a former age, (if only by Wren's handsome barn of a church, and the general alignment of snow-clad roofs.

Here is the market as it existed and still exists to generations of patient gardeners, of market men and women, of flower-girls and orange-girls, of gallants, roysterers, and rakes, and those who hold midnight conversation with the streets; of "Spectators" and "Observers," who have noted the aspects of the scene; of frequenters of bagnios and coffee-houses, or the more modern haunts of the votaries of song and supper. But in the streaky gleams of such sunshine as a wintry March vouchsafes, a new Covent Garden presents itself, with widened approaches and vacant clearings and annexes here and there, as if the old market had taken a new lease of life, and had made up its mind to move with the times.

It wants but an hour to noon. The general business of the vegetable-market is well over, and the flower-market is emptied. A few carts are still lingering, and groups of casual porters and labourers stand huddled together in sheltered corners awaiting the chance of a job, which may open for them the portals of some snug bar or coffee-shop. There is a "débâcle" of empty baskets, a thaw of vegetable refuse; sweepers are at work here and there; while in contrast to the winter outside is the snug arcade, where spring is already blooming with the most vivid and delicate flowers, whose fragrance fills the air. And here are people buying bouquets and blooms for ball and banquets; or funeral wreaths, perhaps, or flowers for a bridal.

But this is the time of day when the fruit-market begins to draw its frequenters together. Before now we may have assisted at the fruit sales that went on in the side aisles of Covent Garden, when apples and pears were to the fore, or cases of luscious grapes, or brilliant plums in hues of purple and gold, or boxes of tomatoes, or great bundles of bananas, or assortments of queer exotic products. But now the scene is changed. We are for the new hall of fruit, the latest developement of Covent Garden—a hall that is not exactly new of itself, for it is the once so-called Floral Hall of Covent Garden Theatre,

which, in the palmy days of the Italian Opera, was intended to form an attractive and fashionable lounge for the frequenters of the Opera-house. It was to be a crush-room, where no crushing should be known, but where, among palms and graceful ferns, and in the midst of a paradise of flowers, the beauty and fashion of the period might wile away the intervals of opera or ballet, or await the coroneted carriage, that was entangled in the serried ranks of vehicles all up and down Bow Street and Long Acre. Here should the fashionable novelist place the scenes of his choicest love-passages. Here should Lady Ida and the Honourable Charles exchange impassioned vows, while the furred cloak of priceless sables was being placed upon the beautiful rounded shoulders, and while the amorous but elderly millionaire glared at them helplessly over the hedge of choice exotics. All this might have been; but, somehow, the Floral Hall failed in its rôle. Now and then a fête or fancy-fair might bring a momentary gleam of gaiety to its forlorn state, but for the greatest part of its existence as an annexe to the theatre, it was but a lumber-room for rubbish, a dock for decayed scenery. But now, as a part of Covent Garden Market, it has found useful and honourable employment. Like Tara's Hall, it has no more to say to chiefs and ladies gay—

So sleeps the pride of former days,
So glory's thrill is o'er!

The hall of fruit might be the temple of the winds, so searchingly does the cool north-easter traverse the avenues of boxes and cases, and whirl about the now empty pulpits of the auctioneers. But with the wide-open gateways giving on the market, and the lines of porters ascending and descending the stone steps, and moving in and out, with heavy cases on their backs, and a stolid confidence in their hearts that, in the event of running against anybody, that other party will get the worst of the collision—with all this ventilation, and movement of affairs, we can't expect the even temperature of a conservatory. There are a good many people already present, mostly well wrapped-up, and keeping themselves warm by lively movements, and by conversation of a genial and spicy character. The auctioneer, in fur coat and mufflers, exchanges smart repartees with his customers, and the glass roof, with its pale-green iron columns, resounds to strident cries, hootings, and laughter. "Come, come," says the attendant policeman, with

the air of an usher addressing a roomful of unruly schoolboys, "not so much noise, please, or you'll bring the Superintendent upon us."

But in the midst of all this clamour, there are quiet, silent people moving up and down, catalogue and note-book in hand, and scrutinising the various lots on sale with quickly appraising eyes; and getting into a sheltered corner below a pile of cases of oranges and lemons, the temperature seems suddenly to change. Instead of the north-easter, we have the balmy air of tropical seas; the snow-covered roofs are exchanged for waving palms, and rich, luxuriant vegetation, and the fragrance of a thousand luscious fruits fills the air. And this last sensation is by no means a delusion; for nearly the whole of the floor of this respectably-sized hall is occupied by pine-apples "just arrived per steam-ship 'Glenlivet.'" Here they lie in their narrow beds, packed in shavings, with compartments to themselves in the deal cases that hold a dozen or more, just as they were hauled out of the steamer's hold in the London Docks, while some of the vans that helped to bring them to the hall of fruit are waiting outside to carry them back to be shipped in some other direction after the sale. For in this matter of exotic fruits, both those who sell and those who buy belong to the cosmopolitan Israelitish persuasion; and Solomon of London is in accord with Levy of Paris, and Jacobs of Frankfort, and Isaacs of Hamburg, so that anything that may be bought cheap in one capital, may be sold to advantage in another.

To speak by the card, the thousand luscious fruits resolve, or rather expand, themselves into some two thousand five hundred pines. But the too tropical scenery must be modified. The greater part of the fruit here present comes from Saint Michael's—from those pleasant isles set in the midst of stormy seas, where all kinds of fruit grow freely in a kind of sub-tropical climate, free from all blights of frost or snow, but hardly hot enough to bring the pine-apple to perfection without the aid of glass above and heat below.

What a noble fruit is the pine-apple when seen in the fulness of its proportions as here, with its royal crown, its damascened armour! and what a marvel of Nature's alchemy is its elaboration, in all its richness and glory, from such a commonplace stem and modest nimbus of sword-shaped leaves! Nor does it grow, like the

prophet's gourd, in a single night, but is the result of a couple of seasons' careful cultivation before the gorgeous fruit pushes forth on its stem. When the fruit is developed there is an end to the plant, which is propagated by offsets from the original root, or from the tufted crown of the fruit itself. Why the fruit should be called a pine-apple, is a yet unsolved enigma. But probably those bold buccaneers, and gay desperadoes, who formed their rendezvous about Campeachy Bay and Key West, and who left their buried treasures here and there on solitary islands for the benefit of the story-tellers and romancers, if of nobody else; these gentry probably had something to say in the matter.

For doubtless the West India Isles were the original habitat of the pine-apple, of which several varieties, but not of a toothsome kind, still grow wild in these regions. And our bold adventurers were, no doubt, struck by a certain outward resemblance between these fruits and the resinous cones that were familiar to them as the product of the tempest-tossed pine-trees of the hills and forests of their native shores. The specific name of the eatable pine is strictly the anana; but let one enter a fruiterer's shop and demand an anana, and the chances are that he would be driven to humiliating explanation before he could obtain his desire. And, indeed, in the earliest mention of its arrival on English shores the fruit is in possession of its English name. In 1661, Evelyn writes: "I first saw the famous Queen Pine brought from the Barbadoes and presented to His Majestie; but the first that were seen in England were those sent to Cromwell four years since."

Always more or less of a Royal fruit has been the lordly pine-apple till these modern days, when it may be found often enough upon the costermonger's barrow, or retailed to children at a penny a slice; while preserved pines in tins from Singapore, and elsewhere, are of excellent flavour and bouquet, and are sold over grocers' counters at sevenpence or eightpence a piece. But the English hot-house pine is still a dish to set before a King, and no other nation can rival our skilled gardeners in raising the fruit, although it is said that the Dutchmen first taught us the way to grow them, and that Bentinck, ancestor of the Dukes of Portland, was the first to introduce their cultivation into this country. Memorable among pine-apples was one

grown by the Thane of Cawdor, in Pembrokeshire, which weighed ten and a half pounds, and was presented to George the Fourth in 1821, for his Coronation banquet. George's French contemporary, Louis the Eighteenth, was notable for his love of pine-apples, a taste which he acquired, perhaps, during his exile in England.

But meditations on pine-apples in general are rudely interrupted by a vigorous fusillade of raps upon the desk of one of the pulpits devoted to the auctioneers. There is a general movement that way among the scattered groups of buyers. "Sale on! sale on!" is shouted, while the resounding accompaniment of the auctioneer's hammer echoes through the building. No time is wasted in preliminaries. The cases of fruit are vigorously handled by porters, and hoisted over the heads of the audience, to a platform, which stands in the same relation to the rostrum of the auctioneer as did the desk of the old-fashioned clerk to the pulpit of the old-fashioned parson.

But vigorous and sonorous as may be the voice of the salesman, he does not trust to his unaided efforts. Three or four assistants crowd about him: one to note, others to watch the biddings, and all to join in the quick, sonorous announcement of the latest bid.

"Two; two n'alf; three!" shouts the auctioneer, snapping the bids by a sort of intuitive process from nods, or winks, or upheld fingers. "Three, three, three," echo the full-voiced choir, with the rapidity of the three cheers of the Kentish fire. "Bang" goes the hammer. Somebody cries "Short," and away goes another lot. As for auctioneer's blarney, there is none; no dwelling upon the beauty and excellence of the fruit. Sometimes, when a lot of especial size and fineness appears over the heads of the audience, there will be a yell of appreciation from the desk:

"Now look at these!" in thundering unison from half-a-dozen voices. "Five, six, seven!" cries the auctioneer in a kind of frenzy, and the antistrophe—if that is the right word—succeeds with a still more furious and united roar of "Seven!" Bang goes the hammer again.

"Brown," cries another voice.

"Look at these!" thunders out the choir. "Bang, bang!" The hammer is wielded so quickly and with such force that the head tumbles off; but the brave owner works away with the stump.

One thing may be noted here, as in all other public auctions. There is always the

discontented man present, the one who "bears" everything, as if by inherited instinct; who starts the bidding, if he can, at a price contemptuously low, and tries to throw cold water on any enthusiasm that may be manifested by the assistants. "Do to bils for tatars," he exclaims, as a lot of the smaller specimens of the consignment appear. But his remarks are received without bitterness, and he seems to be recognised as fulfilling a definite office in the business, like that of the "devil's advocate," who is said to appear whenever there is question of a canonisation at Rome. But the general run of buyers and dealers are rather of a cheerful and even jovial cast; they delight in sitting with legs dangling on piles of boxes, and in hurling their winged words into the ring of people below. They recognise each other by names which are not of either Christian or Jewish terminology. And there is a brisk confidence and decision in their business offers, which are prime requisites in the full gallop of a Covent Garden auction.

As the interest in the present sale slackens, a renewed hammering, and knocking, and jumble of voices is heard from another quarter, and, like the crowd at a fair, people move off "en masse" to the newer attraction. This is a sale by catalogue, the lots being exhibited all over the floor, and long, green catalogues freely distributed. And here the play of emotion on the part of buyers and sellers is less distinctly marked; but the sale proceeds at a still more rattling pace, and with quite as loud and strident vocal accompaniment. So trying is the strain upon the vocal organs, while the stiff nor'easter is whistling through every crack and crevice, that the first performer turns hoarse, and shelters the said organs behind a stout muffler, while his "under-study" takes up the strain where he left off; although still, from behind his shawl, the indomitable man joins hoarsely in the general chorus at critical moments in the bidding.

There is art in all this business, no doubt; although, to the casual observer, it appears only a matter of lungs. But the great masters of the profession are also the most chary of words; and a country auctioneer will display as much eloquence over an old woman's kettle as would serve to dispose of a whole stud of horses at Tattersall's, or a complete gallery of pictures at Christie's. And in fifty minutes or so from now, the whole two thousand odd pine-

apples, ex "Glenlivet," will be knocked down and disposed of, which have taken years to grow, have exercised the minds of shippers and consignees, while the result of the pregnant hour may bring joy or sorrow, contentment or hard times to households far away over the tempest-tossed seas.

To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

To-morrow we shall have oranges and lemons—a shipload or two—with onions from distant realms, and Newtown pippins of more familiar brand. Or are you for Bread-fruit from Otaheite, or Mangosteen or Pomelow from further India, or any other fruit of rare and peculiar virtue? You have only to bide your time, and come upon the right day, and surely you may light upon what you want, in some corner or other of Covent Garden.

CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan," "My Lord Concell," etc.

CHAPTER XXII. DANGER!

FOR some time after that night Miss Kate did not mention Mr. Treayllion's name to me when I officiated as lady's-maid, or when she spoke of the various entertainments at which she was present. I watched her carefully—almost jealously. I noted a certain feverish restlessness about her; a craving for excitement; a fitful, unreal gaiety that told me of a mind but ill at ease.

However, I said nothing. I thought it best.

One morning she came into my room rather hurriedly. "Jane," she said, "I have just had a telegram from Mr. Caruthers. He says, he is going to bring an old friend to luncheon. Look at the name."

She handed me the paper and I glanced at it. This was the message: "Am bringing an old friend, Treayllion, to luncheon, two p.m."

We looked at each other silently. Her face was cold and very pale. "Is it fate, do you think?" she said ironically. "What is the use of my avoidance or coldness?"

"I think," I said, "that he ought not to have accepted—ought not to come."

"Ought not to come!" she repeated, scoffingly. "Does a man ever resist the temptation that pleases him? You

see he is determined to force me into meeting him. And—and Reggie is not here now."

"No," I answered. "What a pity. I wish he were. But, Miss Kate," I added, suddenly, "you could make an excuse. You need not come down to luncheon; it is easy to say you are not well."

"And so appear afraid to meet him," she said, her lip curling scornfully. "No, Jane. I won't give him the satisfaction of thinking that. I will face it as—as I have faced other meetings."

"You have seen him, sometimes, then?" I asked her, wondering a little how the pretty face could look so cold and proud, and the curved, red lips take such hard, stern lines.

"Seen him! Oh! yes. Spoken to him, taken his arm, gone down to dinner once with him; but this will be more difficult, Jane."

"Why, Miss Kate?"

"Oh," she said, impatiently, "don't you know? Can't you see that one can't treat a guest at one's own table, as one treats an acquaintance at another person's."

She paused, then said suddenly, with one of those rapid changes of mood that always made me wonder whether she would ever take anything very seriously:

"I know what I will do, Jane. I will put on my most unbecoming gown, and I will do my hair that way he used to hate—straight on my forehead; you know. When he sees me looking ugly, as well as indifferent, surely, surely he will give up trying to make me think of him—talk to him as—as in the old days."

I laughed. I could not help it.

"Oh, my dear Miss Kate," I said "don't you know yourself better than to think gowns or hair-dressing could possibly make any difference to the opinion of any one who knew you? You cannot help your charm any more than you can help your prettiness."

"Indeed! Indeed, Jane!" she said, seriously. "You make a great mistake. I am not pretty; I never was. I have gone through life, of course endeavouring to make people believe so; but it is really only a question of colour and arrangement. That's why I'm so particular about my gowns, and my—well, my surroundings. Don't you know some one once said that a clever woman always contrives situations, if she wishes to make a picture of herself in the mind of a man? Well, I don't know that I am particularly clever; but I have

always contrived to leave picturesque memories of myself scattered about, and they served quite as well as a reputation for actual beauty. It is quite usual for people—chiefly men, I allow—to say to me, 'The night you wore that yellow gown, or that pink gown, and stood against such and such a background'—or, 'The night you were leaning against those terracotta cushions on the big lounge, in Mrs. So-and-So's room;' or, 'When you stood in that conservatory, with the palms and azaleas behind you;' or something to that effect. You see, my charm consists in getting them to see me, not as I am really, but as part of a picture that is framed in their memory, associated with some touch of colour, music, romance. But in its way it is quite as artificial as the limelight to stage-beauty, or the rouge and antimony to the fading charms of sixty. People think I am pretty or charming, while really it is a mere matter of the blue, or pink, or yellow that formed my toilette, the backgrounds I chose so artfully, or the audacity of my words and manners which made an impression; when a more beautiful, or clever, but less specious person has failed to do so."

I shook my head.

"You may say what you please, Miss Kate," I answered; "but I've known you too long not to know that there's something about you better than looks, or colours, or 'arrangements,' as you call them. Something difficult to forget. I am hardly likely to flatter you, my dear," I added sadly; "but I must say I feel sorry for any man who has once learned to care for you. There are hundreds of women prettier, no doubt; cleverer, perhaps; but there is just something about you—I can't say what—that would always make you stand out alone, so that one would always remember you as having said something, or done something, or looked something different to what any of the other women had said, or done, or looked; something that made it difficult to forget you even if one wanted to, I think."

"Oh," she said, with that odd little smile just shadowing her lips. "That is only just my artfulness, Jane, as I have been trying to impress upon you. It is so easy, so painfully easy, to leave that sort of impression, if women only knew. But as a rule they are too vain, or too stupid, or too indifferent, and that is why they fail. So you see, if I look unbecoming, and am

very stupid and uninteresting, I may yet succeed in disenchanting my undesired and undesirable admirer."

"Perhaps," I suggested with some diffidence, "perhaps, Miss Kate, if you told your husband—"

"Told John!" she burst out stormily. "How could I! That is nonsense, Jane! What is there to tell—shadows, suspicions, fears, that may end in nothing? Oh, no, no. I could not humiliate myself to him by putting into words what—what I can scarcely allow myself to think."

"Then," I said quietly, "nothing remains to be done but accept his visits again; for you may be quite sure, Miss Kate, he won't rest content with only coming here once—more especially if Mr. Carruthers brings him."

She looked at me with something so sad and despairing in the brown eyes, that I felt my own grow dim for a moment.

"I wish," she said, suddenly, "oh, Jane, I wish I could tear myself out of myself! Can you understand what I mean, what I feel? No, I suppose not. And I can't explain. It is horrible, horrible, horrible! Something I don't want to be—that I hate to think I am—warring, and fighting, and setting itself against me, upsetting my life and making it all different. I should like to be good, gentle, prosaic, quiet. An amiable woman—that just expresses it—thoroughly content with her life from day to day; desiring nothing and anticipating nothing beyond. But instead of that, what am I!—discontented, passionate, impulsive; a fiend, a fury, a—"

"Oh no, no, Miss Kate," I interrupted, "not that. Don't say such hard things, or make yourself out something quite different to what you really are!"

"What I—really—am," she said, slowly. "Ah, Jane, that is what no one who knows me, knows. I think there are possibilities within me that I myself am afraid to look into too closely. How shocked you look;" and she laughed a little, but not mirthfully. "Oh, Jane! what a comfort it must be to be good, calm, feminine, prosaic; never to question, never to worry, never to think."

She turned away then, and went to the door. I stepped forward to open it, and as she left, she turned her head and smiled at me.

"I am going," she said, "to make myself just as ugly as I can!" and with the echo of her light laughter still in my ears, I returned to my own duties.

I cannot say how that luncheon passed off, or whether Miss Kate kept her resolution. I saw her no more that day, and the next morning she was quite cool, and calm, and indifferent, giving me my orders, but no confidences; and I, of course, asked no questions.

Miss Kate had a little, dignified, stand-off way with her sometimes, that repressed any outward expression on my part of what our relative positions had so long accustomed me to feel concerning her.

I always felt I must keep my place, and wait for her to make the advance, despite the familiarity and friendliness which had so often broken down the hard and fast barriers between mistress and servant.

But a week passed, and another, and yet another, from the date of that luncheon, and still she never mentioned the name that, I am sure, was in both our thoughts so often. I did not like the new, strange, hunted look that at times came into her eyes—a look as of some wild forest creature being gradually driven into a trap from which it saw no escape.

She seemed to live in a whirl of gaiety, and was scarcely ever at home. One morning, when she looked utterly fagged and worn-out, I ventured on a remonstrance. She only looked at me and smiled that odd, hard, little smile, which of late had taken the place of her childish gaiety and merriment.

"Wear myself out, Jane," she said, repeating my words. "I wish I could. I wish I could be sure it was even possible. I would go on as I am going every day of the year—every day—I mean it, Jane—if only I knew it would kill thought, and wear me out, as you call it."

"That sounds foolish, Miss Kate," I said, gravely. "You ought not to be so ungrateful for all the blessings of life."

"I suppose," she said, "it does sound foolish; but it is only—desperate."

A smile crept slowly to her lips and eyes—a little, cruel, mirthless smile, unlike anything I had ever seen on that bright, sweet face.

"I am afraid, Jane," she said, "I did not make myself ugly enough. It was no use. And now things are almost at a crisis."

"Oh, Miss Kate," I cried, terrified by the despair in her face, "don't talk like that—don't tell me there is anything worse—"

She threw herself down into the big

arm-chair, and for a moment or two buried her face in her hands as if rent by some inward struggle.

"Oh!" she cried at last. "I must speak—I must; I can't keep silence any longer. My heart is breaking, I think. I feel as if I can't bear this strain—I can't! Life is getting too hard for me, Jane. I am not used to playing the hypocrite always; but that is what I have to do—I have to act, act, act, till I am sick of acting, to act to the world—to my husband—to myself—to him!"

She caught her breath with a little, sudden sob, but then hurried on, as if the impetuous flow of words were some relief.

"Oh, life is cruel, horrible, hateful," she cried. "I never wished to see him. I never wished to win his love. Yes, it has come to that, Jane. He does love me, and I know it. I can't deceive myself any longer. And, when I thought I was so safe, so happy, so content, fate throws him in my path; and I can't be always cold, always indifferent, because—because——"

"Oh, Miss Kate," I said in horror. "Not because you care—too—much?"

"Care!" she said, and her hands dropped, and she looked at me in straight and simple fashion, as if she were a child again. "No, Jane, I don't—care. That does not half express it, only all that makes life for me, all that promises happiness, all that is worth the daily existence I call living, is centred in and associated with—Rex Tresyllion. Go where I may, he haunts me. Look where I will, I see only his eyes—his face. It seems as if I can't get away from him; can't for even one moment, forget him."

"It has come to that?" I questioned, sadly.

"Yes," she said, "he has told me, and I have listened."

"Does he know," I asked, "that you care too?"

"I think," she said, "he does. I—I tried my best to hide it. Up to a certain point I succeeded. But there comes a weak moment in every woman's life, and mine came and found me off guard for once. I am afraid"—and she sighed wearily—"I am afraid, Jane, my armour will never serve me again."

"What will you do?" I asked her.

"Heaven knows," she said. "In books, of course, people are heroic, and part; but I am not heroic, Jane. No more is he. It seems so hard to put all the colour,

and sunshine, and light, out of one's life just from an abstract, chilling idea of duty."

"No doubt," I said. "But oh, Miss Kate, if one understands a duty, ought not one to carry it out? The harder a thing is to do, the more certain we may be that it is right to do it."

"You are quite a philosopher, Jane," she said, drearily; "but if you had ever loved and been tempted as some women are, I think you would have found it rather a hard task to act as you preach. No one, man or woman, can possibly fathom the depth and strength of a temptation that has never touched them individually."

"But is it really temptation?" I asked. "Are you sure, Miss Kate, that you are not fancying things—romancing a little—because he is young, and good-looking, and celebrated? They are not things to make up one's life, after all. Indeed, I think no woman would marry a good-looking man if she were wise. They are so conceited as a rule, and they never rest satisfied with only one worshipper, and, unfortunately, it is only too easy for them to find a score if they wish."

"I have often thought that," she said, slowly. "I who once imagined that nothing on earth could ever make me jealous. Yes, Jane, I am afraid it is temptation. Something—I don't know what—is drawing me slowly, surely to him, in spite of sense, reason, honour, duty—everything that claims my life and warns me to avoid him. What am I to do? Oh, Heaven! what am I to do?"

She wrung her hands in a helpless sort of way, and looked at me with great tears brimming in her eyes.

"I haven't told you all," she said, in a stifled, hurried voice. "If ever you have prayed for me, Jane, pray for me now. John is going away—abroad. He told me so, yesterday. Some relation in the West Indies has died suddenly, and left him a great estate there. But there are legal difficulties and complications, and he must go out and see to them himself. He leaves in a week's time."

"Could you not go with him?" I asked, eagerly.

"I asked him," she said; "but he refused to take me. He said it would be useless, and the climate is bad—the place is not the healthiest in the world. It was all so sudden, so unexpected, that I can scarcely believe it, sometimes."

"And what are you to do?" I asked.

"Stay on in town alone, or go to Templecombe?"

"Either, or both," she said. "He lays no commands on me. I may see the season out, or cut myself adrift from its allurements, just as the whim takes me."

"Does Mr. Treayllion know?" I asked, quickly.

The colour left her face. She grew very white.

"No," she said, "not yet. But, doubtless, John will tell him."

"I think, my dear," I said, quietly, "you ought to go to Templecombe, and you ought to have your children with you. Don't stay in town after your husband leaves. What is the use of courting danger, of meeting temptation half way?"

"Such a wise old Jane," she said, mockingly. "Such a far-seeing, clear-headed, sensible old person! That is just what I am going to do. My power over myself is not quite gone. I—I can still see what is best and safest for me." Then, suddenly, her face changed. There was anguish in her eyes, as they turned in swift entreaty to my own. "Oh, Jane! surely it can't last!" she cried. "This pain, this fever, this unrest. Surely, absence and silence will kill it out; surely I shall find rest somewhere—somehow. I don't want to be happy," she added, piteously; "I only ask to have a little peace once more. To know some content and quiet in my life. Now it is all torture and misery, look at it as I may. I can't sleep at night—I can't rest by day. My mind is always strained and racked. Often and often I look at myself in wonder. I can't understand why such a thing should have happened to me. All my life has been so free, so careless. I never thought it was in me to take a serious fancy to—to any one. But, perhaps it won't last, Jane. It is just a sort of illness, like measles or scarlet-fever, or something of that sort. It will run its course and be over. What am I saying? Why it—must—be over. There can be no other way. I tell myself that always."

"Yes," I said, sadly. "If it only rested with the telling——"

"You mean," she said, sharply, "that it might last? That I shall not forget? Oh, Jane! don't you know me better than

that? I am not a bit true, or faithful of heart, not a bit; and this—why, it is degrading, shameful, humiliating even to think of. I must get over it. There is nothing else to be done. Only it seems a little harder than I once thought it would."

"It will be very much harder than you fancy," I said, "if you don't put an end to it at once. The longer you delay—the more you think—the worse it will be."

"You talk," she said, fiercely, "as if one could help thinking! Do you suppose I want to? Do you suppose it makes me any happier? Heavens—no! But I didn't make myself, or my nature, and I have to put up with it, and bear it."

She dropped her hands and leant back wearily in the chair. Now that her eyes were free from tears, her face looked even more pathetic in its quiet despair.

"Jane, say 'Heaven help you and save you,'" she said, entreatingly. "I can't pray for myself any longer. There seems to be something between me and the old, simple faith. I have no mother to go to—no friend to whom I could speak as I have spoken to you, and the struggle is wearing me, and making me old, and sad, and haggard. Oh! if I only could sleep and forget for the next six months. You don't know how I dread them, Jane."

She rose and moved restlessly away to the door.

"If I could die—now!" she said, in a low, despairing voice that hardly reached me. "I am afraid of myself. I seem to have lost all strength. I am like a leaf blown here and there by every gust of wind. There is a very strong wind hurrying the leaf along, now. I suppose, if I believed in Fate, I would call it that. It is as good a name as any other."

The door closed. She was gone. I sat there for long—full of sorrow and of pity for the story I had heard, full of dread for its possible sequel. Was it Fate? I asked myself. Could there be a love at once cruel, compelling, resistless, that made of human lives a sport and plaything? And I only heard as answer the tones of that sad, young voice echoing in my ears—"I will call it that. It is as good a name as any other."

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

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By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER V. THE BITTERNESS OF DEATH.

FROM the heavy morning sleep that follows upon a wakeful night I was disturbed by a hurried knocking at my door. Scarcely had I time to rouse myself and listen, when Kezia, with a candle in her hand, and an expression of great trouble on her face, was by my bedside shaking me softly by the shoulder.

"Miss Dacie; they've come from Master Randall's. He wants you as quick as possible. His wife's took bad—and he's clean daft-like."

The morning was dark and chill; the grey dawn, creeping up over a dull, leaden sky, showed dark streets and dripping leaves.

"Don't say anything to Miss Charlotte yet," I said to Kezia as I went downstairs; "all may yet be well."

"I put the tea-kettle atop of a fire-lighter or two afore I come up to you, Miss Dacie, and now there's a cup of tea ready just to warm you afore you face things; try to sup it a bit, there's a dear."

I could not hurt the faithful creature by refusing, and proceeded to scald myself with sips of hot tea while she stood by, looking furtively at me in a curious fashion, and more than once opening her mouth as if to speak, and then closing it with a snap.

Just as I was starting down the first step she plucked at my gown.

"Miss Dacie," she said, "the girl said took mortal bad! That's what she said—mortal bad. And then, orf she was, she couldna bide for ye. She was that hasted-

like, and she'd a long kind of a face on her as she said them words—'Mortal bad.' Heaven save us, Miss Dacie, but I wish that there picter had never ha' fell!"

Then Kezia shut me out on the top step, leaving me to "face things" with what courage I could muster.

It was not much; for, as I hurried through the streets, where now the new day's life was but beginning to stir, words which I had heard in what seemed a happy time set far back in the past, kept ringing in my ears.

"There has never been anything so good in my life before; never anything so good—never anything so good——"

When I reached the house the door seemed to open of itself, and there stood my brother Randall.

At least, something in his likeness; and yet a Randall that I had never seen before; a hopeless, haggard-eyed man, with no smile of greeting for me, no shining in the eyes that were like mother's.

He just took me by the hand as he used to do when he was a boy, and I his ever-so-much elder sister, and thus holding me, without one spoken word, he led me to the room where Lucille lay.

A white, still face, like the face of a marble statue; a cloud of bright brown hair thrown back across the pillow; pale hands extended in extremity of weakness—was this Lucille?

As I bent over her she stirred, called back from that misty borderland, that lies between life and death, by the sense of a fresh presence.

The eyes that never yet had given me an ungentle look unclosed; the lips that were livid, as though death had kissed and chilled them, quivered, and then smiled upon me.

I screwed up my face, and tried to keep back the tears that rose and blinded me. I untied my bonnet, and flung it down anywhere. I wanted to be brave and helpful; we all—that is all of us who are worth anything—want to be these things, and more, at such a moment; but those of us who have gone through the ordeal know how hard it is, and how the tears will blind, and the sobs will choke us, just when we want to see most clearly, and speak most calmly.

"Nay, Dacie; do not cry so, dear," said Lucille, and put up her hand to touch my poor, drawn face. "I am so glad you are come. I wanted to see you. Randall said he would send for you. You will be good to Randall—won't you, dear?"

But even as I promised, even as I held back the sobs to speak, something told me that if Lucille left him, neither I nor any one could be "good" to Randall any more.

Then I watched the stillness and silence into which Lucille had once more fallen, while the little timepiece on the mantel-shelf seemed to fall into regular cadence, and say with its soft beating: "Nev—er—any—thing—so—good. Nev—er—any—thing—so—good."

Presently Randall, having, as I could see, by a supreme effort, gained the possibility of calmness, came close to my side, and bent over his dying wife—yes, dying! It is only when you are dying, only when there is nothing to do but to wait for the end, that doctors leave you alone.

I had met one, grave and sympathetic, leaving the house as I came up to it. I caught a glimpse now and again of another, seated by the fire in an inner room. But these things only made a surface-deep and cursory impression on my mind. My deeper thoughts stood alone with Lucille and her husband—we three, isolated from all the rest of the world.

As Randall's breath touched her cheek, Lucille stirred. Once more her eyes opened, but they were misty now—lacking the clearness of recognition.

Past and present mingled in her thoughts, blurring each other's outlines, melting the one into the other.

"Call my baby 'Margaret,'" she said; "it was mother's name."

I started.

There was a baby, then. The little maid of whom I had dreamed so often had really come among us, but at what a cost!

I heard Randall say, "Yes, dear;" I saw him raise the soft white hand that was

lying so lifeless and inert, and press his lips upon it—his lips, that showed white under his moustache; while his eyes—

Oh! I had seen mother's look like that when she told us that she should never live to see her boy again! It was a craving, hungry look, full of a passionate yearning doomed to linger there, and die unsatisfied!

With a little, pitiful moan, Lucille turned her head uneasily upon the pillow, looking up at Randall with misty, troubled eyes.

"It was so hard, so hard, to live through—day by day, and year by year. Sometimes I could hardly bear it; I was bad and fretful under it. I could not have lived through it at all, if it hadn't been for the boys. Dumphie came straight from Heaven, I think, to comfort me."

Down went my humbled head upon the bed-clothes. All my past dislike to the four boys, Dumphie especially, rose up and judged me.

"Dumphie was always the same—so gentle and so loving. He used to pat my face when he saw the tears upon my cheek. Once some one struck him for doing it. He only cuddled up to me, and said: 'I don't mind, Muddie—I don't mind one bit.' But I felt him shake as he held me. Oh, my poor boy!" Here her voice broke into a cry, the cruel past was rising up before her like some dreadful vision. "Alison, Alison! do what you like to me, but not the boys—not the boys——"

In a moment Randall had her in his arms; was bending over her, calling her by every fond, endearing name, and striving to chase away the shadows of the past by the might of the strong, present love.

And he prevailed. She looked up at him with quiet, seeing eyes; she looked from him to me and back again.

"Randall," she said, "am I dying?"

For all answer came a cry that welled up right from his bursting heart.

"My darling— Oh, my darling!"

For a moment—silence; while the clock ticked on, telling to my straining ears the same sad burden as before:

"Nev—er—any—thing—so—good—nev—er—any—thing—so—good——"

And now the goodness, and the sweetness, and the beauty that had come into my brother's life was fading out of it—passing just a little further away with every tick of the little clock.

"Heaven has been very good to me, dear," said Lucille, and nestled closer to her husband's breast.

"Dacie," she went on, "you will be very good to all of them, I know; and Dumphie will help you, he is not like other children—not like the rest. When they came to see me just now he did not cry like the others; he touched my face in the old, loving way; he looked at me as if he wanted to know what he could do—he was always like that—always. Tell him to love his little sister, and be good to her; tell him I said so."

As the last word of this loving message left her white lips, a change came over Lucille.

She gazed long and earnestly at Randall; he at her. Her eyes had a strange, fixed light, a wonderful intensity of consciousness.

The nurse had come noiselessly to the bedside several times; the doctor had stolen quietly across the room and looked at, and touched the patient, who was fast slipping though his fingers. Now they came no more. There was nothing more for any one to do.

And Lucille lay with the wonderful death-light in her eyes, and Randall, watching her, seemed to have gone with her to some far-off place apart, to which they two, he and she, and none other, could attain.

Then, in a moment, though the smile lingered on her lips, the light had died out of her eyes, and—still looking on him she loved—saw him no more.

I did want to comfort my brother; I did try to speak those words of sublime consolation that Heaven itself has given us for such supreme moments. But I could not, for the sobs rose up and choked me.

She, so good, so sweet, so tender, to be lying there white, and still, and dead; never to lift her dear hand to mine; never to speak in that gentle voice, never to laugh in the old, merry fashion at the little jests we both loved; never to meet me, never to greet me.

I declare I almost forgot my brother Randall in those first few moments of bitterness.

Not for long, though; and, I think, neither he nor his ever again.

When death steps in, we cease to measure time. For the moment, we live and move in some world where time is not. The loved one has left us; but was it this morning, or yesterday—or has this awful silence lasted so long that we cannot count its duration?

I cannot say when it was that I stole across the landing and up the passage leading to the pleasant, sunny room that was called the nursery. It had suddenly been borne in upon me that I had a mission to take up, a task to perform, that even now I could redeem my promise to Lucille, that I would step in and spare Randall—something.

I would tell—the boys.

Resolutely putting Dumphie out of my mind as a distinct figure, merging him in the rest, and so striving to gain courage—if such weakness as mine can be called by such a name—I turned the handle, and opened the door.

The scene that met my eyes might well have upset a more assured composure.

There, opposite the fire, stood a cradle, begirt with the soft lace curtains at which I so well remembered to have seen Lucille's active fingers stitching. Round about were seated—or rather squatted—the four boys.

Dumphie on a stool at the head of the cradle, Glennie at the foot, Stephen and John holding on to one another in order to meet this new and stupendous crisis in their lives in a fitting and becoming manner, at the side furthest from the fire.

Could such a picture ever be forgotten—the picture of the four boys regarding their sleeping treasure—wondering, awed, tremulously happy in the possession of this marvellous new gift?

A moment I hesitated, wavered, almost felt ready to go back whence I had come, my tale of woe untold.

But Glennie was too prompt for me. He had me by the gown in a trice; he drew me close to the casket that held such treasure-trove in the twinkling of an eye. He took upon himself the office of master of the ceremonies.

"There is an ikkle baby come," he said. "It has an ikkle face and two ikkle hands; it sleeps all the time; it is quite perzackly." Then he spread out his chubby paw over the head of the cradle. "It is our very own," he said, solemnly; and Stephen and John nodded their heads as one boy, and echoed "our very own."

I looked through the mist of falling lace, and so caught my first glimpse of baby Margaret—the Maxie who was to give me such infinite joy, to cost me such anguish of tears, to yield me such precious comfort in the time to come.

All this while Dumphie was silent.

Dumphie had graver thoughts. His silence seemed a thing that I must fling out my hands to and push from me—a thing I dreaded beyond any words that could have been.

Oh, Dumphie, Dumphie! why do you look at me with grave, wide eyes, full of tender questionings?

Are not my knees shaking under me? Is not my heart beating so low and heavily in my wretched little body that all the world seems going round with me? Why need you make things harder for me than they are already? What can I say to you, you loving, faithful soul? What can I do to soften the pain of the cruel, bitter truth?

For a while, Dumphie and I looked at each other in silence, while the three others came closer and peered through the curtain of the cradle timidly, touching a tiny fist that shows pink through the white.

At last Dumphie spoke.

"Aunt Dacie—can I go to—my mother?"

There was a sob in Dumphie's throat before those two last words. The child feared he knew not what. He scented something wrong, though he could not put a name to what he dreaded.

Well, well—if any one had told me, in the bygone days, that ever I should cuddle up that goblin-faced boy, and cosset him as though he were a new-born babe, I should not have believed them—that is all.

But I did. I sat down and hauled him up into my lap. He was ever so many sizes too big for such a process. My tears fell down upon his wondering face, like rain, as I told him—Heaven help me! I know not how—that he could not go to his mother, because there was no mother to go to any more.

Events never come in single file. They prefer to crowd around, tumbling over one another's heels and tripping one another up.

They so jostled me, happening in such rapid succession, and generally upsetting me, that I, Dacie Birt, at this juncture of my life, grew dazed and bewildered, and passed at last into that frame of mind and condition of body in which feeling is numb and astonishment impossible.

Hugging Dumphie wildly, trying to stifle his cries against the bodice of my plaid dress; holding him hard and fast as though in fear lest the great sobs should tear him asunder before my eyes; conscious

of Stephen, and John, and Glennie swarming about Dumphie's legs and mine, in such a state of terror and excitement that they seemed not three boys, but thirty; being in fear unspeakable that the nursery door should open and my brother Randall come upon a scene of such confusion and grief, I must have been deaf to the sound of a cab driving wildly and stopping with a jerk.

I certainly heard nothing that betokened an arrival, until a low tap at the door made me start and look round, and to us entered—my sister Charlotte.

I have said, in my then condition, astonishment was impossible. I could only look at this unexpected apparition in a dazed and feeble manner, holding on harder than ever to Dumphie, and finding no word to say even when Charlotte sat quietly down and drew little Glennie to her arms.

Not so Kezia, who had followed her mistress into the room. Kezia, in a frightfully patchy toilette, consisting of her large wrappering-apron, kitchen cap, and best Sunday bonnet; Kezia, wringing her hands and swaying her lank body backwards and forwards in an agony of consternation; Kezia, voluble in declamation, but, in obedience to an imperative sign from Sister Charlotte, lowering her voice to that husky, creepy-crawley whisper supposed to be suitable to the house of mourning:

"Which it's all the fault of the extra girl, Miss Dacie, if I must never speak another word alive. Up she come, and right foremost Miss Charlotte out she brings it. Says she: 'That sweetest lady's gone right off to her heavenly home;' and Miss Charlotte gives a screech and jumps right up, and 'Kezia,' says she, 'get me my bonnet and my paisley shawl, and send the extry girl for a cab!' You might have knocked me down with a feather, Miss Dacie—you might have knocked me down wi' nothink at all, and I can't say no more than that. And she not out of the house but once last summer, and that in Mr. Peterson's best bath-chair, at two-and-six the hour and sixpence for the boy as pushes. I'm all of a shake and all of a tremble; and it's two funerals instead of one we'll be havin', and all through the upstart ways of that extry girl takin' so much upon herself as no one axed her."

"It is no one's fault, Sister Dacie," said Charlotte, fondling poor wee Glennie as he stood nestling against her shoulder, "no one's fault but mine."

Her dark eyes were swimming in tears; her pale face wore a faint and unaccustomed flush. She looked almost like the Charlotte of old; the girl who had cherished such high hopes, only to see them die, and to lay them in a tomb that knew no resurrection with her own trembling hands.

"All the fault has been mine, dear. The fault of the years that lie behind. I have been of no good in the world; no help to any one, only a wearisomeness and a burden—to you, and to Kezia."

"La, mum!" broke in Kezia at this point, "don't be bringin' in me—don't make no account of me. You're welcome to all I've done, and twenty times as much; and oh! Miss Dacie, that's the way she's bin a-carryin' on all the blessed way. 'I've bin no good,' says she; 'I've giv' in,' says she, 'and never fought agen nothin', in my selfish sorrow I've forgot as others in the world have sorrows too; I've never tried to comfort no one. I've bin a wicked woman,' says she. And I ask you, Miss Dacie, what was poor old Kezia's feelin's, a-hearin' of one of her precious ladies callin' herself like that?"

"It was true, Kezia, it was true—all that I said, and more—true a thousand times over. The voice of these motherless ones; the thought of my brother's sorrowing heart; the thought of this house of death and mourning; these things drew me like cords, and that is why I am here."

Sister Charlotte spoke with an indescribable dignity, though the tears were raining down her face. Dumphie had hushed his sobs to look at her; Stephen and John had drawn near to her, open-eyed; Glennie was blubbering unrestrainedly upon the paisley shawl; and I was beating my brain for some sensible and soothing utterance, that should quiet everybody, when the door opened, and my brother Randall came into our midst.

He expressed no surprise at the sight of Charlotte among the rest of us. I do not think he felt any. Some impulse had prompted him to seek Lucille's children, perchance to comfort them, though all comfort was so very far from his own heart. He hardly looked as though he saw anything consciously.

I started to my feet, and moved to Sister Charlotte's side. I feared for her, lest the strength born of sudden and violent excitement should fail her.

As for Kezia, she dropped into a chair as if she were shot, and flung her apron over her head, Sunday bonnet and all.

It was left for Dumphie to speak for every one. He rushed to Randall's side, caught him round the legs, and cried out sobbing:

"Papa Birt! Papa Birt! We will be very good to you now mother is gone away!"

END OF BOOK ONE.

THE "ROUND TABLE" IN COUNTY CLARE.

I DOUBT if my reader has ever been in the barony of Burren, in the county of Clare. It is the country of which Cromwell said:

"There isn't a tree big enough to hang a man on, nor water enough to drown him, nor earth enough to bury him in."

Bog, of course; where in Ireland is there not, save in parts of Armagh and County Down? Bog covered, as usual, with sweet-gale, and bog-myrtle, and sedge, and here and there patches, red as blood, thickly set with the insect-catching sundew. Stony glens, with alder-fringed streams, and occasional mud patches, out of which shoots up the royal fern. But the distinctive feature of the district is the bare, flat, limestone uplands, strangely scored with parallel marks, as if, while the rock was still soft, a giant plough had been drawn over it. These shallow furrows throw up the richest, sweetest grass in all Ireland, along with yarrow, and abundance of very small clover, and bird's-foot trefoil. To this is due the excellence of the Clare sheep, famous in the days when the Irishman could say, as was said of the Scot before the Methven treaty:

Old was his mutton, and his claret good.

A weird-looking country. Nowhere, not even in some Cornish "rocky valley," have I felt so fully what is meant by "the bones of the land"—the big giant; there are his ribs, multitudinous, whether it was ice or mere water power that stripped him of flesh and sinews.

Oh, the irony of Nature! Nearly three-fifths of Ireland is carboniferous limestone; but where is the coal? That, and its associated shales, have mostly been stripped off, and only the "calp" left.

Ireland, when the lands were a-making, was, perhaps, a buffer to England—bore the brunt of those primal storms which shaped our part of the world and fixed the nation's destiny.

I had been walking through this barony

of Burren. One does not walk half enough in Ireland; the "shoneen" (sham gentleman) looks down on the practice, and so a walking tourist is, in many parts, scarcely understood. But were I young again, I would do little else. The car is delightful, and, if you sit on the box, you see both sides; but there's nothing like walking for keeping in touch with people such as the Clare peasantry were in my young days. I had gone to Burren to see the prehistoric remains, meaning to get round that way to Connemara, while my children were enjoying themselves on the sands at Kilkee. I had seen Lisdoonvarna with its sulphur springs, now a thriving watering-place, then as small as Llandudno was when I first knew it; and then I had got on to the cliffs by the Hag's Head, and had looked at the poor thin coal seams and the remains of old workings, and had decided not to stop at Liscanor, but to push on to the next village. My aim was Ballyvaughan or Galway Bay, where I heard there was often a "hooker" (coasting vessel) that would put me across. I did go across, not in a "hooker"—that would have cost two days' delay—but in the "corragh" (coracle, skin-boat) of two Isle of Arran fishermen, who were bound for Galway; it was a fitting end to the expedition. But I am anticipating. Night began to fall; I had lingered too long about the cliffs, and that eerie feeling came over me which makes it pain, yet pleasure, to be alone. After a long Irish mile, I saw the light from a cabin window, and I was soon knocking and walking in, with "God save all here" to a rather numerous company gathered round the fire.

"Save yourself kindly, sir; ye're welcome," said the master, rising.

And soon, like the rest, I was eating stirabout with plenty of good milk.

No one asked me why I had come. If I chose to tell them, well and good; but politeness silenced their curiosity. So to begin a conversation I mentioned a "cromlech"—as I foolishly called it—that I had seen on the road.

"Cromlech, sir, you'll excuse me," interrupted a bright young fellow—the schoolmaster, of course. "Cromlech is a circle of stones. But what you've been describing is a 'dolmen,' or 'kistvaen' they call it in Brittany. And as for these things being prehistoric, no such thing. The great architect, Mr. Fergusson, has shown that Stonehenge itself was built since the Romans went."

How did this Clare peasant know all

that? He had read a review of Fergusson's book in the "Nation."

"I get it every week," he said, with just pride—for the "Nation" was then the most cultured paper in Ireland.

But, while I was telling him that Mr. Fergusson's was not the last word on the big stones controversy, we were interrupted by the shrill voice of a little old man, such a man as was once very common, but is now, alas, very rare in Ireland—the "story teller," who, on occasion, could turn out a copy of verses after "the Groves of Blarney" pattern, and who had all the legendary lore of the district at his fingers' ends.

"Hold your tongue for a 'omadhaun' now, Barney. You South Munster men think you've got the world's learning; but they don't teach everything at Cork College. 'Dolmens' and Romans, indeed! Hear now, Mike Greean"—to our host—"your mother there, long life to her, she has the native Irish, pure, as we speak it in Clare, and as it's spoken nowhere else, every bit as well as myself; and she knows that his 'dolmens,' or whatever else he'll call them, are just the beds of Diarmuid and Grainne" ("labha Yarmuith a's Grainne")—he slid out the words just as my Cornish cousins slide out the sweet names of cove, and bay, and hamlet in West Penwith.

I pricked up my ears. Of course, I had read J. F. Campbell's "West Highland Tales"—if you have not, reader, do get them somehow; and if you have any Celtic blood in your veins you'll delight in them more than you ever did in "the tale of Troy divine." Here was a chance. Could I pick up a "sgeulach" (story), a variant on those collected by Campbell?

"Why, that's Diarmuid of the beauty spot," said I.

"Of course; and who else would it be? Him that Grainne saw at the ball-play, as she looked out from her 'grianan'—that's her sunny chamber. She had her own room that way for cheerfulness. Grian is the sun. Yes, you may blush. It's your own name, Mike, and your father's before you, and his father's, and so on. And never a one of you was seen that hadn't a bright, sunny face, the sight of which would be good for sore eyes. Well, and as she watched the play, Diarmuid's mantle slipped off his shoulder, and her eyes fell on the beauty-spot; and from that time she must be his—there was no escaping it. But she was betrothed to Fionn, the old chief of the Feine, after whom these Fenian chaps have named themselves; and Diarmuid was

loyal, and would not go against his chief. So she laid 'gessa' or spells upon him, if he didn't do her bidding*—and in those days no man could stand a woman's spells; it's mighty few can do it now, but then they'd more power, for the world was younger. Saint Patrick himself, in his hymn that he made one night when he was wandering in the dark—as your honour might have been, if you hadn't seen Mister Greean's light—says: 'Christ is my druid, who'll keep me from the spells of Smiths'—cunning fellows they were in the heathen days—'and of women, too.' That's why Diarmuid went off with her out of Tara; and some say they were married, and some say he would not marry without Fionn's leave. But, married or not, where they rested he built up one of these stone chambers for shelter for her. And as Fionn was close upon them in the pursuit, that's why there are never two of these together; but they're all over Ireland, from the Dublin mountains down to the furthest point of Kerry; and wherever there's one it's a token that Diarmuid and Grainne rested a night in that place. And your honour's heard all this before, I'll be bound; for it's not my story. All the old people that have any stories at all know it for true. I've heard it from Galway men and Limerick men; yes, and from a Donegal man, a queer creature entirely, the heavens be his bed! He was a sort of a hermit, and carried rosaries and holy medals and the like; and he'd foot it almost from one end of Ireland to the other, and then he'd go into some place, no one knew where, till one of the great Church festivals would be coming round. And this man had all the fights between Diarmuid and the Feine; and how Oscar stood up for Diarmuid, and would by no means have him treacherously slain; and how at the last Fionn made as if he forgave him, and let him have Grainne, and sent them away. But he meant mischief all the while; for before they'd had time to get comfortable, he set on foot a grand hunting of the boar with whose life Diarmuid's was bound up. Well, sir; you've heard the rest!"

"No, never; I've only read it as it was set down from the mouth of an old man in Ilay, off the west coast of Scotland, just

as far off as your Arran Isles are from Clare. A Mr. Campbell, one of the Clan Diarmuid, used to go round and get these tales from all sorts of people. And that's just what I wanted to do, to see how far yours was like his. So go on, please."

And then he told all about the hunting, and how Diarmuid slew the boar, and then Fionn set him to see the length of him by pacing his back. "Measure him against the hair," said Fionn; and, as Diarmuid did it, a venomous bristle pierced his foot, and he fell a-dying. And then followed Fionn's remorse, and how he would cure the dying man by bringing him in his clasped palms a drink from a certain well. But as he was stooping down to give him the water, he thought of Grainne and his wrongs; and his hands relaxed, and the water trickled out, and Diarmuid died.

I did not take it down at the time. How could I, in a cabin full of people, with no light but the peat fire? The old man was full of delight at hearing that among the Gael in Alban (Scotland) these stories are still current.

"Blood's stronger than water," he said, "and they're our brothers, after all. Isn't the very name of Scot from *Scota*, the King's daughter of Egypt, who ran off with the Milesians and came with them to Ireland? And was not Scotland colonised from Antrim?"

Then I asked had he heard of Arthur and Lancelot and the Welsh tales; for the likeness between the Lancelot and Guinevere legend and that of Diarmuid and Grainne had never before been borne in on me so forcibly. No; he hadn't. The schoolmaster had, of course; but he could not see resemblances, for he was still in the "sun-myth" stage. His "Nation" had dosed him well with Max Mueller and Cox; and he was down upon me at once with the boar, which "proved" Diarmuid to be the same as Adonis. Nevertheless, I held, and still hold, that, Adonis or no Adonis, the Diarmuid story is an earlier form of that of Lancelot, the Gael being an earlier wave of the great Celtic race; and "Lancelot," whatever its Welsh or Breton original may have been, having been altered, almost out of knowledge, to suit the age of chivalry. My old theory is that "Chivalry is of the Celts;" and certainly, even as the Brehon was a humaner, distinctly a better code than that Anglo-Norman law of the working of

* The weird old formula (Campbell, vol. ii., page 411), "I am laying thee under spells . . . to take thy head, and thine ear, and thy wearing of life from off thee, if thou takest rest by night or by day, until," etc. etc.

which *Mrs. Green* gives such horrible instances in the reign of *Henry the Second*, so in many little touches *Diarmuid* is a nobler nature — I do not say than the *Laureate's Lancelot*, but than the *Lancelot of the Round Table*. Little delicate touches there are both in the *Irish* and in the *Highland* versions, impossible to reproduce in a poetical paraphrase, though *Miss Tynan's* lines on the running away of the pair are worth quoting :

" . . . Now, by thy knightly fame
Take me." Her heavy hair was on the ground
And o'er his hands and feet. His eyes 'gan flame

And flamed and lightened all his dusky face,
Who leaned to her and for a minute's space
Looked on her, thinking how all loss were gain,
To kiss the lovely eyelids in their place ;

Yet freed his gaze from her, and loyally
Urged his allegiance to the King. But she :
"Your bonds—your bonds, my knight!" Like
silver rain
Rang through her tears her laughter suddenly.

Yet loyal would he plead ; but *Oscar* spake :
"Now by the vows no knight may take and break—
This woman's words can bend thee to her will.
Away, away, before the sleepers wake."

Then he bent down and swung her from her knee,
And kissed her long and kissed her passionately,
Held to his heart her face so still and chill.
"Sweet, thou and I together till death," said he.

This is excellent, but too modern for the legend in which, as purely if he had been *Perceval*, *Diarmuid* lives apart till *Fionn* consents to annul his betrothal. The old *Welsh* legends are so generally lost ; the red book of *Hergest*, containing the *Mabinogion*, is merely the fourteenth century retranslation into *Welsh*, with suitable alterations, of the *Continental* romance. I do not know where to look for the *Cymric* analogue of *Diarmuid* and *Grainne*, but I feel certain that it existed, and that it was the basis on which the romance poets and minnesingers built the *Lancelot* and *Guinevere* episode. These *Celtic* tales took the world by storm ; as *Mr. A. Nutt* says in his "*Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*," it was *Geoffrey of Monmouth* who first made them accessible to the lettered class of *England* and the *Continent*. He thereby opened up to the world at large a new continent of romantic story, and exercised on the development of literature an influence comparable, in its kind, to that of *Columbus's* achievement on the course of geographical discovery and political effort. Twenty years had not passed before the *British* heroes were household words throughout *Europe*. The much-abused *Jelt* is the father of our *Arthurian* epic ; and the earlier branch, the *Gael*, evolved

the earliest known form of that legend, the latest rendering of which delights us in the *Laureate's "Idylls."*

But our discussion in that *Barren* cabin did not tend that way at all. We began to talk of the neighbourhood — of the cliffs of *Moher*, which I had seen the day before, and where I met a party of young *Salamanca* priests as lively as kittens, shouting and singing (I seldom heard "*Nora Creina*" better rendered ; and I then made acquaintance with that *Galway* national song, "*The Blackbird*," which I have several times heard since), throwing pebbles over the cliff at the gulls that were sailing some hundreds of feet below, and toasting "*The Star of our College—Starvation.*"

"They didn't seem to have suffered from that lately," I said.

"No," replied some cynic, "before the big famine *Ireland* was for every one, as the song says, 'a pleasant country for hospitable cheer,' and it's still that same for the clergy, more power to them."

And then, as I remarked how nicely the walks up to the cliff's edge, and the little shrubberies, and paths, and luncheon-houses were kept, they fell to glorifying *Colonel O'Brien*, and telling how he was a Member of *Parliament* worth having, for there was never a boy wanted a lift in life but he would manage to get him something in *London*, or up in *Dublin*, or somewhere ; but all that was changed now. The *Colonel* was dead, and the young people were in *Italy*, and no one to take the old man's place. They didn't exclaim against his successor's absenteeism ; perhaps he was to come back soon ; they had been delighted with the bright dress of the bride, and the long gold chain, so long that it was worn double, which her husband gave her. It was some time before I could get the talk back to the old tales. Everybody could talk about the *Colonel* and his heir ; and so tongues, that before had perforce been still, were set going. We even got on religion ; they seemed to scent my faith, though I had not said a word to show what it was.

"Ah," said the "vanithee," "we'd all get on well enough together, but for the soupers. Many's the black lie I've seen prosper with them in the big famine times. There were some that thought they'd got us then when the hunger was upon us."

"You're right, ma'am," I responded ; "to make a man's hunger a lever to move his faith is foolish as well as cruelly wicked."

At last I sketched for them the Grail story: how the cup wherefrom the Lord drank at the Last Supper was kept by Joseph of Arimathea; and in it, at the Crucifixion, he caught the blood which followed the piercing with the soldier's spear. This cup, after many wanderings, he brought to Britain—we know he came to Glastonbury, and there planted his staff, which became the Christmas-blossoming thorn. After him it was kept by a race of kings, all pure, for none but the pure might touch or even look upon it. But at last its keeper sinned grievously, whereupon the spear, which had always been kept with the cup, wounded him, and he lay, sore smitten, yet in a trance. But the cup went up to heaven, and now only sometimes could even the purest get a glimpse of it. And that was the San Grail, or holy basin. And once, when it had slid along a lightning-flash, and had half shown itself to the knights at Camelot, they all vowed to go in search of it; but none might touch it, save the wholly pure Sir Galahad; while of the rest none could even set eyes on it, save Perceval, pure, in deed, though not in thought, and Bors, who, sinning once, had ever since repented.

"And now," asked I, "is there anything like that in your old stories?"

Well, yes, there was, though like the latter part only. The different castles, for instance, that Perceval, the real hero of the Quest, for Galahad is a later invention, comes to—Castle Perilous, the Castle of the Spells, and so on—are in scores of the old tales.

One the story-teller gave me, in which the seeker for adventure comes upon a castle that has no hole in it big enough for a mouse to go in. He paces round and round, and is going off in despair, when, suddenly, as he looks again, it has a window for every day, and a door for every month in the year. The Grail, too, which provides meat and drink for all comers, and for each that which his soul most lusteth after, is surely Fionn's enchanted cup, which, among its other virtues, cures wounds, and restores to life those slain in battle.

Of course there are differences, and, therefore, difficulties. In the Gaelic tale, Fionn has the mystic cup; and Fionn, in many points, is the analogue of Arthur. But, as Mr. Nutt remarks, "there is a great fusion of the old stories in the romances." Romancers picked out what suited them, and pieced them to-

gether in what they thought the most sensational way. One great point of resemblance is that, whereas the Grail was thought by its presence to bring meats of all kinds for the visitors to an enchanted castle, so of "the caldron of Dagda"—one of the three treasures of the earliest Irish—it is said, "a company used not ever to go away from it unsatisfied."

And, as for the cup belonging to Fionn, Arthur's analogue, this is not always so. In "Conall Gulban," one of the best of J. F. Campbell's folk-tales, the winner of the "flask of balsam"—three drops from which bring the slain back to life—is not the King, but Conall the champion, who in many points, for example, in his passing unscathed the lions who are on either side of the great fortress gate, is the exact analogue of Perceval.

The sum of the matter, then, is, that in the Grail story, as we have it in Chrestien of Troyes and the other metrical romancers, and in the prose of Malory, there are two wholly incongruous parts—the Christian myth about Joseph and the Last Supper and the soldier's spear, and tacked on to this, an old heathen story altered and adapted into "the Quest of the Grail."

Of this latter, Perceval is the true hero; he who, brought up in the wilds, comes as an uncouth half-savage to Arthur's Court; just as in the Gaelic folk-lore, "the great fool," under many names, comes to the Court of the King of Eirinn. All the castles, and damsels, and dwarfs, and lions are simply heathen, belonging to what Mr. Matthew Arnold called "the magic of the Celt."

Even the "loathly damsel," whom Malory's readers will remember, has her exact parallel in "the grewsome carlin" (hag), who always comes in in the Welsh and Gaelic tales. As far as any trace is left of the old heathen Welsh legend, the Gaelic Fionn seems to be that mysterious "Bran the blessed," who also has a magic cup, and who, in the Christianised romance, becomes Brons, the Fisher-King. Fionn, indeed, was a fisher par excellence, and his catching and tasting "the salmon of wisdom" gave him his pre-eminence, as a like chance made Merlin wise.

All this very unchristian and very archaic machinery in the second part of the Grail romance, "the Quest," is unexplainable on any other supposition. In-

deed, Mr. Nutt, the latest and fullest exponent of a view already put forth by Villemarqué, by Emile Souvestre ("Foyer Breton"), and by J. F. Campbell, makes it absolutely certain that "the Quest" is, at bottom, a heathen Celtic story, complete analogues of which are found in existing Gaelic, if not in Cymric folk-lore. Where were the two parts pieced together? In Britain, Mr. Nutt thinks, because here, somehow, the Gospel of Nicodemus, in which Joseph of Arimathea is the central figure, was very much better known than it was on the Continent. Here then is, at any rate, a working hypothesis—Grail legend, part i., Christian, developed out of the Gospel of Nicodemus; part ii., heathen, adapted from Welsh, or Breton—probably Welsh—folk-tales.

But I didn't try to tell all this to the company, who grew, like myself, sleepier and sleepier, while the story-teller went on and on with his castles, and damsels, and magic cups of healing. It was delightful to doze off and wake, and find him still telling the never-ending tale, into which I suspect the teller often interpolates some fresh adventure if he finds he has not talked everybody to sleep with the authorised version. I could have stayed there all night, coiled up in the warm corner; but a few began to go, and my host would put me into the guest-room, where it was stuffy and damp, for the one pane of glass let into the wall was immovable. I could not sleep, and when I heard the story-teller depose, and snatches of song followed by the preparatory scraping of a fiddle, I came out, and jig followed jig till with "the top of the morning to you," and a draught of milk, and more stirabout from the caldron that seemed as inexhaustible as Fionn's, and shy, kindly good-byes from the half-dozen girls who had stayed for the dance, I went on my way to Ballyvaughan.

That's one of the very few times when I've heard from a peasant's mouth any of the Ossianic tales. Ever since then, I've been wanting to show the connection between the two epics—the Ossianic and the Arthurian. I should have begun with the Diarmuid, or Lancelot episode; Mr. Nutt has begun with that of Perceval, namely, the "Grail Quest." Possibly the Wagner music has given fresh interest to this story in its Germanised form. Anyhow, he has done his work so well that I hope he will soon go on to the rest of the cycle.

THRIFT MADE EASY.

"You have lost your husband; he was a good workman, and a good servant. He has left, I hear, a large family, and I should like to help you till your children can support themselves. What sum shall I allow you weekly?" These words were addressed to a poor woman by a manufacturer at Birmingham.

"I am thankful, sir, for your kindness," said the widow, in reply. "My husband always gave me fifteen shillings a week to keep house; but we have not him to keep. If you will give me ten shillings a week, we shall manage to get on."

That workman had been earning thirty-five shillings a week, and had spent one pound upon his own selfish pleasures. In spite of working-men's clubs, and temperance societies, and other elevating institutions, men of this stamp still exist in large numbers, and throw ridicule and scorn upon all who urge them to put by something for a rainy day.

Those who are inclined to be thrifty have abundant openings presented to them for saving. "Put twa pennies in a purse, and they will creep together," says a Scotch proverb. Penny banks are a great blessing, but they would be a greater blessing if they could be brought to the doors of the people. Much has been said and written against collecting friendly societies; but, if there were no collectors, every industrial assurance company would have to close its doors, for the working classes would never take their weekly premiums to the office. The plan was tried years ago, and proved an utter failure. Through the agency of the collector, thrift is made easy to working men and women.

The writer recently spent several days in the company of insurance agents, in the manufacturing districts, going with them into the homes of the people. These districts varied in point of respectability; in one district it was no unusual thing for the agent to draw from one house premiums amounting to five shillings; in another, the premiums ranged from twopence to sixpence. In some cases the money had to be collected at a given hour; if the agent called a little later than usual, his money was spent.

Those who declaim against insurance-collecting societies, would be astonished at the good feeling which exists between the agents and the assured. What's in a

name? As a rule, it is the agent, and not the society, in which the people put their faith. The man is everything; the society nothing. The collector has free admittance to every house; he is regarded as a guide, philosopher, and friend, and is consulted upon all sorts of questions.

There are now a number of insurance companies who devote their energies almost exclusively to business of providing for funerals; and, for one penny per week, the means for a decent funeral are guaranteed. The working classes have large families, and can only just manage to live from hand to mouth, and cannot lay by for such a contingency as death; and to this class the value of such institutions strongly appeals. Thus, when death takes their child from them, and their heart is charged with grief to the fullest, they can at least be spared the anxiety entailed by want of means to lay the little one beneath the ground.

"Little by little," remarked an insurance editor, "we have learnt the value of insurance as a bulwark against the contingencies which make havoc of human fortunes; but," he asked, "is it not a little strange, and very regrettable, that no efficient machinery exists for insuring clerks against the loss of employment?"

It is not a little strange to hear of the existence of an editor who has never heard of the "efficient machinery" worked at Manchester and Liverpool for insuring clerks against the evils resulting from loss of employment.

The Manchester Warehousemen and Clerks' Provident Association was established in 1855; and, since its formation, upwards of five thousand one hundred and fifty members have received allowances, amounting in the aggregate to twenty-six thousand, eight hundred pounds. For a contribution of two shillings a month, it pays to a member out of work one pound a week for the first four weeks; ten shillings a week for eight weeks; five shillings a week for twelve weeks. For four shillings a month, double benefits are given. The same amounts are paid in cases of sickness; assistance is granted to members in any special case of distress, and annuities to members of sixty years of age who have been subscribers to the Association for twenty years.

Moreover, the Association endeavours to find situations for its members. The secretary daily attends the Manchester Royal Exchange, and is in constant com-

munication with the leading employers in the district. Some idea of his energy in this department may be gathered from the fact that during 1887 he answered one thousand and twelve advertisements; one hundred and eighty-five situations were offered to the Association, and one hundred and three accepted. We ought to add that no pressure is brought to bear upon a member; he is quite at liberty to accept or decline any situation offered by the Association.

A similar association exists in Belfast, as well as in Liverpool; possibly many other towns have agencies of a like character. The Liverpool Clerks' Association advertises itself as the perfected system of employment agency, and claims to be the best mutual insurance company existing.

These societies are, however, purely local in their scope. A national society, securing members against loss of employment, has yet to be established; against sickness, something has already been attempted.

In the complacency begotten of the prevalent ignorance regarding the ways in which people bring disease upon themselves, Dr. Fleming Phillips forcibly points out that it is generally taken for granted by those who are well, that they are going to continue well. Consequently, when they are overtaken by disease, they are too frequently unprepared to meet it and the pecuniary demands that it entails. Among those demands, a doctor's bill is never the lightest; sometimes it is the heaviest. If it be the breadwinner who is thus disabled, the difficulty is all the more serious; and the patient may be permanently crippled in means as well as in health.

"Is there no device," asks Dr. Phillips, "by which protection may be had from this most serious risk? Even if we cannot prevent the illness, can we not do something to lessen its lamentable results?"

The working classes have long ago answered these questions for themselves, and five millions of them are estimated to have insured themselves against sickness. Their organisations, such as the Foresters and the Oddfellows, do not, however, meet the wants of clerks and the middle classes generally.

Prior to 1885, no organisation existed for enabling this class to meet the extra expense incurred by sickness. In that year there was founded at Edinburgh a Sickness Assurance Association, which has already issued over ten thousand policies. For

an annual payment of one pound seven shillings from the age of twenty, the Association makes an allowance of one pound a week during incapacity, either through sickness or accident. For larger allowances, larger premiums are expected; but we understand that in no case does the Association insure to the full extent of a person's income. It does not insure women at all, because they have too many ailments, and, moreover, it is very difficult to define incapacity in their case; but the Association is, undoubtedly, meeting a felt want, and deserves to succeed. The writer has himself experienced the benefit of the Association.

"Pensions for Clergymen," was the heading of a newspaper paragraph, a short time ago, which stated that a lady had given twenty thousand pounds towards the creation of a fund for assisting with pensions the clergy of the Liverpool diocese, who may have become unfit for the discharge of their duties through infirmity. Laymen, not provided for by a generous Government, are forced to provide their own pensions, if they want to live in ease when their step becomes feeble, and their hair turns grey.

"I should have insured when I was a young man, with no cares and responsibilities," said a bookkeeper of fifty to the writer. The premium, he lamented, was too heavy for him to pay now; and his chances of ever being free from what Charles Lamb called "This thorn of a desk" seemed very remote. His employers, he explained, were never known to give pensions: when a man could not do his work he was turned adrift.

But a man should be prepared against being "turned adrift." How? By means of an Endowment Policy. Some insurance companies will accept monthly payments; and he could have his policy payable at fifty, or fifty-five, or sixty, and, with profits, it would amount to a nice little sum to fall back upon. With this money he could buy an annuity for life, and he would enjoy the "glorious privilege of being independent," all the more from the fact that he bought it himself. In brief, then, a pension for life is within the reach of nearly all classes, by means of an endowment policy, which secures

1. A sum of money at a given age.
2. A provision for a family in case of the death of the assured before the endowment matures.

By this plan a man may reap the benefit

of his prudence; if he should die, his family will reap the benefit.

Since the year 1881, the German Government has been developing a vast system of National Insurance, which is destined ultimately to embrace the whole of the labouring classes. There is already besides an Employers' Liability Law, one which compels the working-men to insure against sickness; and it was the earnest hope of the late German Emperor, and Prince Bismarck, to see the final development of this principle in a law compelling the working-man to insure against old age, and so to make provision for his declining years. It is somewhat surprising to find this system—which is generally looked upon as a pet project of a certain section of Socialists—flourishing under the auspices of so despotic a Government as that of Germany. But a good gift is good whencesoever it comes; and we might well welcome compulsory thrift on the German principle to this country.

AN OLD MAN'S DREAM.

Al, child! I watch you with the firelight's gleam
Lighting the beauties of your golden hair,
Nestling within the glories of your eyes,
And kissing tenderly your cheek so fair.
Your bright young life is stretching on before,
Whilst all my youth is in the far away;
I dream but of the time to come no more,
Whilst you have hardly ventur'd into day!

And yet I love you with a love as pure
As ever found its birth in human breast,
I love you with a love that will endure,
And hold you ever as its first and best.
How I have watch'd, as one would do a flow'r,
Your many charms, my darling, soft unfold,
Longing to shelter you thro' storm and show'r—
But you are young, my dear, and I am old!

It would not do to place your slender hand
Within mine own, save for a little space;
It would not do for you and me to stand
Before the altar in God's sacred place.
Another one will come and woo, and win—
A lover, with a youth as bright as thine—
And I will keep my envious thoughts within,
And pray that you may taste Love's joy divine.

May and December are not made to wed,
Spring's sun and winter's snow can never meet.
God bless thee!—there is no more to be said—
And keep thee fair and pure for him, my sweet!
Dream in the firelight, I am watching near,
Weave all your tender fancies o'er again;
May all life's happiness be yours, my dear,
Only for me the solitude and pain!

AN OLD SCHOOLMISTRESS.

A SKETCH FROM LIFE.

SHE was a relic of a past generation—a survival of the earlier days of the century—who might have shaken hands with Miss

Pinkerton in the dignified retirement, which doubtless crowned that worthy lady's latter days; or expressed in discreet terms her tenderness for the local curate to the sympathising ears of Miss Ansten's Emmas and Charlottes, and received in return the blushing avowal of their affection and esteem for Edward or Henry.

When we knew her she was old—immeasurably old—to our school-girl fancy. Her exact age was a veiled mystery, and we considered her a centenarian at least. She must really have been very much over eighty in the days when she kept school for us on exactly the same system as she kept school for our mothers and grandmothers before us; we were harassed with no "exams," Oxford or Cambridge "locals" had no horrors for us. French was taught by a young woman, with large feet and thick waist, who came from Switzerland, and instructed us also in German and Italian; our music soared only to the accomplishment of a "Fantasia de Salon," with a tune and variations; of science or geography we were practically ignorant, and not an "ology" or "ism" found place in our curriculum.

Our domestic and sanitary arrangements were as antiquated as our course of instruction. The fire-place of every room was religiously filled with sacking—if there happened to be a fire-place—and the allowance of hot baths was one at the end of each "half" to each young lady! A large can of warm water was supplied to each room of four once in ten days. This allowance had probably satisfied our mothers, and been considered over-abundant by our grandmothers. I know that old Miss P—— thought the weekly tub, stipulated for by the parents of some of us, a ridiculous and cold-producing fad much to be deprecated.

The nucleus of the school consisted of those forlorn waifs of society, poor little beings known as "Indian children." Eight or nine girls, three or four little boys, sons and daughters of far-away Colonels and Majors, whose substitute for home and parents was the thick fortnightly letter from India, and an occasional visit from some good-natured officer, or his wife, who had promised their anxious mothers to see and report on "the children" while at home. There were many other girls, but we were the backbone of the establishment; spent our holidays at school, were dressed and looked after entirely by old Miss P—— and fared on the whole as well, I dare say,

as if we had been the inmates of a model college, or high-school boarding-house.

The house was a charming old place, taken from the owner on a life-lease. Charles the Second had hidden there, so said tradition, and it was duly haunted by a wicked Duke, according to our version, who promenaded the corridors with a drawn and dripping sword, and also, rather inconsistently, played the piano in the great drawing-room in the small hours of the morning. Perhaps the healthiness of the house was not increased by the fact that a spring had burst up in the front cellar, which contained three feet of stagnant water; but we did not seem to take much harm. At least, I don't remember that we often ailed.

The grey, sleepy old house lay deep in the curve of a sleepy valley, and, looking back at life under Miss P——'s auspices, we seem to have sleepily idled through our days in a perpetual drowsy afternoon. Once a day we went "trottoir," as we phrased it, marching two and two along the same unvarying road, to the commencement of the sleepy market town, and then marching back again, after a tantalising glimpse at its seldom-visited streets. At our head, leaning on the arm of one of the senior girls, marched Miss P——. She was a very small, rather stout woman, ruddy-cheeked and well-preserved, with the brownest of curled false fronts and the whitest of false teeth, short skirts draped high to display a pair of very neat feet, of which she was very proud, and a pair of heavy double eye-glasses dangling over her square velvet jacket. She walked with a springy step, and was very anxious to impress every one with her activity and youth.

To further this end, I suppose, it was the custom for us all, from the head girl to the smallest flaxen-haired boy, to address her as "dear." In every other particular she was formal and precise with the extremest formality and precision of her generation. But, either to show her distance from venerable age, or to impress the casual visitor with our affection for her, we dropped the respectful "ma'am," or "Miss P——," and always called her "dear."

The word sounded very funny from the tow-headed scamp afore-mentioned—a little fiend of mischief and deceit, brought up among grooms, stable-men, and miners, and who, I remember once, paralysed the whole community, and nearly sent the head governess into hysterics, by refusing

to do a sum, with a fluent string of oaths and curses of the warmest description.

Years of school-mistressing, of posing before parents and guardians, had crystallised upon the old lady, leaving her with no emotions to speak of, and an excellent digestion.

Miss P——'s correspondence with the admirable Mrs. Chapone herself could not have been more stilted and formal than the letters which accompanied the half-yearly bill to the relation of each girl. They were written on thin paper, in violet ink, and fine-pointed characters, and were full of capitals, dashes, and points of exclamation. Three together were the usual number: "!!!"

Here is a sentence from one of these epistles lying before me:

"Your dear daughter has conducted herself to the satisfaction of myself and also of her excellent teachers throughout the half-year that has just elapsed. Her studies have tended, I trust, to the cultivation of mind, and refinement of manners, so essential in the young !!!"

This sentence, with slight variation, was the burden of each letter accompanying the half-yearly bill. We were always described as little models of deportment and propriety, though Heaven knows this was far from a true description of most of us.

The ceremony of "breaking up" occupied the whole week preceding the day of departure. Miss P—— composed notes and drew up bills. Ourselves and our "excellent teachers" had entire holiday. One evening there assembled a crowd of relatives and friends, and we gave a concert in the "blue drawing-room." We all performed something—from "Roedel's Storm Rondeau," executed by one of the senior girls, whose parents considered her a second Arabella Goddard, to a trio, pleasingly entitled "Diamond Sprays," thumped in concert, with much squeezing and pushing, by three little sisters, while the music-mistress murmured an audible "one, two, three, four."

After the concert we each received a prize or a "mark of approbation," so there were no jealousies, and our parents were satisfied of the general excellency of our behaviour, even if we had not attained a prize. Such little prodigies of goodness as had been able to keep their conduct-books free of "noughts" also had a blue bow pinned on the right shoulder. "Noughts" were round O's placed against the name for bad behaviour, and marking a deeper stain of

iniquity than an X. When the O's amounted to forty during the half-year, the wretched culprit forfeited her right even to a "mark of approbation," and was looked upon by all as a sort of criminal. But this seldom occurred.

With the departure of the "excellent teachers," and the "English girls," all rules of discipline were relaxed, and we "Indians" disported at our ease under no severer guardianship than that of old Miss P——'s maid, who sold us chocolate and toffee at a premium; lent us an occasional shilling when we had forestalled our pocket-money; and never "reported" any of our ill-doings. We picked flowers, paddled in the brook—how the nettles on the bank stung one's ankles!—and fished for minnows in the pool below the waterfall. We ransacked an empty coachman's cottage, which we were strictly forbidden to approach, after forcing back the catch of the window with a penknife in the most approved burglar-fashion. We were very disappointed, I remember, at finding nothing mysterious or awful in its four deserted rooms, such as mouldering bones, or blood-stained documents. Even the apples, ranged in rows along the floor, hardly consoled us, though we risked detection, and the wrath of "Billy," the surly gardener, and pocketed as many as we could. We ranged about the great empty stables, after climbing a wall, and demolishing the top of an ancient water-butt, through which our intrepid pioneer thrust her foot and leg, and was hauled back with much difficulty and stifled laughter.

The remembrance of the scene is clear as I write. The grass-grown stable-yards; the deserted pigeon-cote leaning crazily on one side; great doors hanging on rusty hinges; empty boxes; and rickety ladders, leading to vast, dim lofts; great elms, and blue sky shutting in the picture on one side; on the other, the tiled roofs of the stables and coach-house, all moss-grown and weather-stained; the wooden clock-tower, and the clock that had not gone for thirty years and more.

Thanks to plenty of fresh air and a very bountiful table, we escaped a great many of the ills to which we were logically entitled by all the laws of hygiene, considering our primitive drainage and water-filled cellar. Well for us that it was so, for Miss P——'s doctoring was on the most elementary principles, and she had a rooted objection to sending for the doctor. One of the

little boys fell while playing one day; and complained continually of pain in his wrist for six weeks after. It got so swollen, that at last he was sent to the doctor, who pronounced that one of the small bones had been broken at the time of his fall!

For all ailments to which school-girl flesh is heir, Miss P—— administered a glass of hot sherry-and-water and two rhubarb pills. Every complaint was treated with this remedy. If we were feverish, if we were chilly, if we had a cold in the head, a cough, or a pain in the back, a tumbler of hot wine-and-water and a couple of pills on a plate were brought to the patient's bedroom when she went to bed by the maid, who saw that both medicines were duly despatched. One of us, who suffered from peculiarly cold hands, enjoyed this treat almost nightly in winter, as she made a point of laying her deadly chilly fingers on the old lady's warm hands while wishing her "good night." Miss P—— would have considered the omission of the pills, and the administration of sherry-and-water alone, as distinctly immoral and tending to intemperance.

But I remember that, on one occasion, the pills were given without the sherry. A number of the elder girls, during term-time—the "half," as it was called in our day—stole into the kitchen-garden and feasted on apples and plums of unutterable hardness and greenness. We were caught in the act by "Billy," the cross gardener, a pronounced misogynist and an old bachelor, who lived by himself at the lodge, and detested the sight of the "young ladies."

He reported us, and we were summoned to Miss P——'s room, where we were very severely lectured. Nine noughts were placed against each of our names—why nine I do not know—and the pill-box sent for. We were ten sinners, and, on the box being opened, only six pills were found. Nothing daunted, the old lady sent off her maid to the town, a mile and a half distant, for a fresh supply, while we waited, seated in two rows; and the old lady alternately read her paper and resumed her lecture. It was a warm, spring day, and the sun shone outside with provoking splendour, and flickered through the branches of the old cedar by the window, filling the room with moving, dancing points of light.

We all sat very still and very bored, mentally devising plans of vengeance on the abhorred "Billy." When the pills arrived, we each took two in two gulps of

water, under the old lady's stern eye, and retired, stiff and wrathful, feeling that she had had the best of us.

As years went by, the school dwindled and left poor old Miss P——, though she never formally retired. Even the "Indians" failed her at last, and she remained almost alone in the big, deserted house, resolutely fighting with her approaching death. She was not a religious woman; the formula of belief only was hers, with whom life had all more or less been a formula and conventional show. One of her strongest aversions was any approach on the part of the local clergyman to "serious conversation." He and his wife came weekly, and played at cards with her from half-past seven till half-past nine, but neither ever dared to make any reference to her approaching end. She was never actually ill, and never took to her bed, and to the last she feebly struggled about the empty house and neglected gardens with a forlorn attempt at her old activity. One evening they found her in her arm-chair in her great, dim sitting-room, the newspaper fallen from between her hands, and her head sunk as if in sleep. She had been all alone and dead in the darkening room for more than an hour.

SUPERSTITION AND EVIDENCE.

SUPERSTITION may be defined as a perversion or exaggeration of an instinct common to humanity; the instinct, namely, to believe in the supernatural. That superstition has its roots in human nature itself, we may readily enough admit, when we remember how universally widespread it was, how desperately it has clung to mankind, with what difficulty and after how many years it has been practically subdued. For its subjection has been only partial after all, in spite of the prosaic tendency of science and education, and, although we shall never return to the gross and crude beliefs of former days, yet evidence is not wanting that, under modern culture and modern learning, there still lies a vein of superstition ready to manifest itself upon occasion. Of course there are many who are entirely proof against what they would call the folly of bygone ages; but, perhaps, these are the exceptions which prove the rule, while we must remember that Free-thinkers like the Emperor Frederick the Second, were not uncommon even in the most unenlightened and superstitious days.

That man is naturally a superstitious animal the records of biography and history show plainly enough ; and, in our own day, will any one deny that omens and presentiments, for example, have not still their believers ? Do we not constantly hear "authenticated" stories of haunted houses ? Do not spirit manifestations and eccentricities startle us now and again even in this commonplace century ?

Men's minds are not yet ruled absolutely by the laws of exact science. May that cast-iron despotism be still far distant ! But, in truth, it is difficult for the student to say where rational belief ends and superstition begins. Until science has unfolded every secret of the universe, until every law which governs not only the physical but the mental world, has been clearly enunciated, until we can explain the reason of every apparent deviation from what appears a normal state of matters, there will still be room for the imagination to wander amidst the regions of the occult.

Why, we may ask, should it be natural to believe in an existence after death, and superstition to believe in the possibility of apparitions and similar phenomena ? Or, why may it be natural to believe in the existence of powers of evil, and superstitious to believe that there may be communications between them and human beings ? These questions seem difficult of solution ; and, indeed, one whom no one will accuse of credulity, Dr. von Hartmann, admits that it is impossible to set aside the evidence for the truth of such phenomena as those of presentiments, wraiths, and apparitions, and acknowledges that their existence is in perfect harmony with his advanced philosophy.

The truth is, that it requires a long experience to decide what may be true in regard to the supernatural, and what is undoubtedly false—an experience which the loose observation and the fatal method of reasoning prevalent in bygone times was incapable of using. For even if we were to admit that all things may be possible, it does not follow necessarily that all things actually happen, or are even likely to happen.

Forgetfulness of this simple rule betrayed our forefathers into paroxysms of terror, which resulted in the most atrocious cruelties. Thus, even if it were thought possible for misguided women to take midnight excursions on a broomstick in order to be present at conventicles of a some-

what unorthodox nature, yet it would require a considerable amount of evidence to persuade rational beings, who did not themselves possess that power, or had not actually seen it exercised, that human beings had actually done so. The best exculpatory evidence would have been that at the time the accused were supposed to have been absent on their unlawful errand, they were actually, where they should have been, in bed by the side of their lawful husbands. But this was not sufficient for the sapient Judges of mediæval times. They were perfectly certain that the accused were at the witches' sabbath—there could be no doubt of that, for torture had wrung that confession out of them, or their accomplices—and the thing to be accounted for was their apparent presence at home.

This was easily done ; it was explained that an obliging demon assumed the appearance and took the place of the absent wife in order to prevent suspicion falling upon her.

Another thing, which, in less prejudiced minds than those of mediæval ecclesiastics and Judges, might have awakened suspicion as to the reality of the witches' power, was the curious fact that they never used these powers to escape from their persecutors, or to bring vengeance upon them. This, however, was easily explained. So far from proving, or suggesting, that witches never had been anything else but harmless, this fact was rather evidence against them. For Satan was unable to resist lawfully-constituted authority according to the popular theory ; and, therefore, the accused must needs be the servants of Satan, seeing that they were incapable of defending themselves. There was one case on record, however, of a witch who, when she was actually tied to the stake, breathed in her executioner's face with a terrible curse ; the result of which was that a hideous leprosy broke out upon the unhappy man, and he expired a few days later.

Slight inconsistencies like this did not, however, as a rule, trouble the minds of that enlightened age.

Culture and education did very little to emancipate men's minds from the degrading superstitions regarding witchcraft. It was at the dawn of modern culture that this belief reached its higher development. It required, as before mentioned, an enlightened experience, along with a capacity for reading that experience aright, to destroy so hideous a faith which lay like a nightmare on Europe. Leo the Tenth was

a cultured and learned pontiff, not over credulous in religious matters, and grievously suspected by historians of latent paganism, yet he was ruthless in ordering the extirpation and persecution of witches, and even issued a bull to that effect. While, on the other hand, what is most curious of all, an Irish synod, in the ninth century, condemned those who believed in the possibility of sorcery and witchcraft, and refused to admit such to communion until they had recanted their error.

Although a belief in sorcery has existed more or less in all periods of ecclesiastical history up to comparatively modern times, yet the ninth and eleventh centuries were comparatively free from such belief. And the systematic persecution of witches did not begin until the fourteenth century, while the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were famous for a terrible epidemic of witchcraft, and for the frenzied cruelty practised upon the unhappy victims of popular superstition.

The whole history of magic and magical rites is full of interest, and is a connecting link between nations widely separate in point of space and time. We find manifestations of sorcery curiously similar as to details in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, down to more modern times and modern nations. The ghastly description of magic rites, given by Horace in two well-known passages, might almost serve as a picture of a mediæval witches' meeting; while the wax figures of Greek magic reappear in the stories of malignant witchcraft of later days.

Two things are found to characterise all witchcraft—the possibility of holding communication with the dead and the invisible powers of darkness, and the power of doing mischief to obnoxious people by means of charms and spells. The ingredients of these charms are very similar in all nations, and consist, in part at least, of fragments of the dead.

But while sorcery is common to Pagan and Christian times, occult beings and powers had a terror for Christians unknown to ancient Greece and Rome. In the first place, with the developement of Christianity, the realms of darkness received a large addition in the persons of the gods and goddesses of ancient times. These divinities had caused no terror in the ancient joyous Greek life; they had been easily pleased, and for the most part had sympathised with men. But the Church taught that these were demons,

whose sole employment was to lure mankind to eternal damnation. Then with Christianity new value had been given to the individual soul; and the terror of being among the lost, in eternal agonies, shook the minds of the stoutest. To the fears of temporal disaster were added the terrors of untold spiritual dangers from the numberless demons always on the watch to entrap men and to hurl them into ruin. Life could not have been altogether happy under these circumstances; fears within and without must have characterised the lives of many in early and mediæval days.

But for a while the Church found a remedy, as indeed it was her business to do, in what has been called sacred magic. Consecrated candles, oil, bread, water, the relics of saints were all talismans or charms against the powers of evil, while to the priesthood belonged the right and privilege of casting out demons. Yet, after a while, these weapons of spiritual warfare grew strangely dull, and the world became an arena in which demons and men fought in unequal combat; the reality of the terrors of the supernatural were vividly present to men's minds, and stories of demons in bodily shapes, actually tempting the saints themselves to ruin, were numerous.

But still with regard to sorcery and invocation of demons the Church hesitated for long as to their treatment. Sometimes, while of course admitting the reality of the existence of demons, she denied the possibility of human communication with them. More often she admitted it, but does not seem to have taken very active steps against it, until comparatively late in her history; and for long sorcery was mildly punished even in the case of ecclesiastics. The fact is that the Church was so occupied in consolidating her temporal supremacy, and extending her jurisdiction, that for long she had little leisure to attend to anything of less importance. But when her empire was established and her supremacy secure, then internal affairs took up her attention, and heresy and witchcraft attracted notice. Heresy was, of course, according to the then current theology, the deadliest sin into which a human being could fall. It was the mother of all crimes and abominations, and when, as at last was done, sorcery and witchcraft were included in that designation, special attention was given to them. Mr. Lea, in his magnificent "History of the Inquisition," has traced

the developement of witchcraft and its subsequent classification, under the head of heresy, with great minuteness. It was not until late in the thirteenth century that the Inquisition took cognisance of both divination and sorcery as well as of the more ordinary forms of heresy.

Pope Alexander the Fourth issued a bull in 1257, stating that while Inquisitors were not to be turned from their proper duties, if any case of sorcery seemed to include manifest heresy, they should certainly take cognisance of it. This was the opportunity of the Inquisition; and they did not let it slip. It was found that sorcerers frequently made an illegitimate use of the sacraments. The Inquisitors promptly regarded this as equivalent to heretical views regarding these ordinances, and in this way the Inquisition gradually extended its power over supposed dealers in magic arts.

Invocation of demons, they also maintained, argued heretical views with regard to these beings. In short, the ingenuity of the Inquisition surmounted every difficulty in the way of their having complete jurisdiction over the souls and bodies of men. But sorcery and witchcraft developed as the persecution against them increased in severity, nor were the Popes themselves exempt from the accusations of sorcery, or from the machinations of sorcerers.

Sylvester the Second (1000-1003, A.D.) had a great reputation as a magician, gained by his studies at Toledo, then a growing school of learning; while John the Twenty-second (1316-1344) was actually assailed by magic arts. The conspirators against his life confessed that at first they intended to use poison, but failing opportunity, had resorted to spells and charms to gain their end. They were promptly executed, and the Pope set to work to root out all dealers in the occult arts. Special Inquisitors were, in the year 1318, appointed to investigate into the matter throughout all the Western world, and we are told that John endeavoured also to enlist the sympathies, and gain the help of the Oriental Patriarchs and Archbishops in his crusade against the powers of darkness.

This action of John the Twenty-second may be regarded as the first universal attempt to seriously extirpate witchcraft and sorcery from Christendom. Then shortly grew up the stories so familiar to us all, of the witches' sabbath, of the nocturnal

meetings with Satan, of the worship of the devil, and of the wild, demoniacal revels which so terrified our forefathers. The infection rapidly spread throughout the fourteenth century, and, by the beginning of the next, had developed into a veritable delirium of terror. Between the years 1404 and 1554 no less than thirty thousand victims of this wild superstition were burned by the Inquisition alone.

We may certainly attribute some part at least of this terrible state of things to a form of insanity. There can be hardly any doubt but that many of the accused truly believed themselves possessed of supernatural power. This hysterical kind of belief might easily be epidemic to a certain extent, and provide the Holy Office with numerous victims, who generally believed themselves to be guilty. But in such days it was certainly necessary for people to be careful and guarded in their language. A threat of revenge, followed by disastrous accidents to the property or person of the threatened individual, might lead to the most serious consequences to the rash and hasty speaker, with an introduction to the Inquisitor, having the stake as a result. Innocent people had little chance if once seriously accused; torture soon drew full confession from prisoners, hopelessly inculcating others as well as themselves, and confession was usually followed by execution.

There was no limit to the wild credulity of the times. No story was too wildly improbable to be believed; no power too great to be attributed to the witch. Little girls, daughters of witches, possessed superhuman powers conferred by their mothers' arts; and the alleged naïve display of those powers frequently led their mothers to the stake.

Of course, had the smallest suspicion existed that confessions wrung by torture from the unhappy victims were not altogether to be trusted, things might not have gone to the extent they did; but torture was then, except in England, fully recognised as an infallible means of getting at the truth.

Even in England, the infamous practice of testing for witches by means of thrusting long needles into their bodies to find the insensibility of pain which was bestowed by Satan on his worshippers, served the purposes of more elaborate torture well enough. Thus the whole history of witchcraft, during the fifteenth

and sixteenth centuries, is a long history of terror, credulity, and cruelty—a dreadful instance of “man’s inhumanity to man.”

The causes of the epidemic of witchcraft may be briefly summed up. There was, in the first place, as we have seen, a natural tendency in the human mind to believe and to welcome the marvellous—a tendency indulged more or less in all countries and in all ages. This was the foundation on which the wild and terrible stories were built. An undoubted impulse was given in an evil direction by the classification of witchcraft with heresy, instead of with insanity, as ought to have been done. But a new importance was given to it by this means, and more urgent reasons for hunting the sorcerer to death. Stories of devil-worship, and such like heretical practices of olden times, were next revived, causing new horror and fear to those who heard them. A morbid vanity now, doubtless, induced many to lay claim to the possession of arts so terrible and so important; and from these half-crazed wretches torture, and the ingenious questions of the Inquisitors, soon extorted stories enough to terrify whole nations, and to involve the honour and lives of thousands. Thus the epidemic began to spread, and soon raged terribly.

The Church beheld with fear an apparently rival spiritual power threatening her very existence. The gates of hell seemed opened for the destruction of the Church. Her rites and ceremonies now seemed to avail but little against the charms and spells of the witch. They might keep the charm at bay for a while; but the spell once cast, the Church was powerless to remove it. This, we may remark in passing, was not to be wondered at; for what often passed as the malignant work of the witch, was often the result of disease or accident, which spells holy or unholy were powerless to affect. To such a height did terror rise, that witches were no longer bound in twos or threes, but literally in hundreds at one time.

Thus the dawn of modern civilisation was ushered in amid the frenzy of superstition and savage cruelty. But the rational interpretation of experience at last gained the day, and official belief in sorcery gradually passed away. Yet popular belief lingered long in secluded parts, and may, perhaps, in some places, be only now passing away for ever.

CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By “RITA.”

*Author of “Dane Durdan,” “Derby and Jeon,”
“My Lord Concorit,” etc.*

CHAPTER XXIII. PROMISED BLISS.

A WEEK later, Mr. Carruthers left for the West Indies.

It had been a hurried, feverish week—all preparation, and arrangements, and shopping, and rushing about; and Miss Kate had thrown herself feverishly into it, giving herself no rest at all. The boys came from school to bid their father farewell, and they were always with her. I think Mr. Treayllion kept carefully out of her way that week. No doubt—I thought to myself, bitterly—he had his reasons for doing it. He knew his time would come.

Then, as soon as Mr. Carruthers had gone, Miss Kate started off for Templecombe, and I remained behind in charge of the town house. I felt very sad and low-spirited as I saw my young mistress go. She looked so pale, so worried, so heart-broken, that I knew, only too well, what a terrible battle she must have been fighting with herself. I could only hope that the children might comfort her, or, at least, occupy her thoughts sufficiently to prevent that morbid dwelling upon one idea, which is, in itself, so often a cause for self-created unhappiness.

Two days after she had left town I answered the door to a visitor in the shape of Mr. Treayllion. He looked a little conscious as he saw me. The house answered for itself the question on his lips. Shuttered windows and closed rooms spoke of departure only too plainly.

“Has your—has Mrs. Carruthers left town?” he said, eagerly.

“Yes, sir,” I answered.

He fumbled about with his card-case; in his nervousness, dropping two or three on the steps.

“Can you tell me,” he asked, “if she has gone for any length of time? Won’t she finish out the season?”

“I believe not, sir,” I answered, stiffly. “She made no mention of coming back to town, at all.”

“She is at Templecombe, I suppose?” he continued, as he handed me his card, at last.

Our eyes met. I saw a faint, sudden

colour leap into his face. He, too, looked changed, and ill, and haggard; but I had no pity for him. It seemed to me cowardly and unmanly to persecute a woman in her weakness and misery—a woman unprotected and alone as Miss Kate was now.

"Yes, sir," I said, even more coldly.

"Thank you, Jane," he said, and then turned and walked slowly down the street. I watched him, noting how all the life and spring seemed to have gone out of his step—remembering, too, how different he had looked that first evening I had ever answered the door to him, standing on the steps of Mrs. Cray's house, with his over-coat thrown over his arm. What a queer, up-and-down sort of thing life is!

I went back to my own room wondering what he would do: whether he would go to Templecombe, or write to Miss Kate there? I was sure he intended to do one or the other, by the look in his face.

About a week later, I had a letter from Miss Kate, saying that the housekeeper at Templecombe had been taken very ill, and she wished me to come down there, and was sending up another of the servants, in my place, to Grosvenor Street.

I, therefore, packed up and left town the same day.

I bought some newspapers and periodicals at the bookstall of the railway-station, in order to beguile the hours of the long journey, and after the train had fairly started on its way, and I had studied the appearance of my travelling companions, I settled myself comfortably on the seat and opened one of the papers.

I had read most of its contents, when my eyes rested on a paragraph which had not yet attracted my notice, though I had glanced over it once or twice:

"Terrible collision in the Bay of Biscay.—Loss of the steamship 'Florida'."

I started, and cried out, so that my companions turned round to look at me.

The "Florida" was the steamer in which Mr. Carruthers had sailed. From the account, it appeared that a large American vessel had run into her at night, and she had sunk immediately. Every one of the passengers had perished, asleep in their berths; one or two of the sailors, alone, had escaped by springing on the deck of the destroying vessel.

It was one of those casualties of which we read, again and again, with a thrill of horror and of pity; but forget soon enough if we are unconcerned in the catastrophe.

I had read, often enough, of shipwrecks and fires at sea, and collisions, and such like accidents; but when I read the name of the doomed vessel, and knew that it held one human being associated with my own life and experience, the full horror and shock of it seemed to stand out in very different colours.

Did Miss Kate know? What would the news be to her? I asked myself. Sorrow, or regret, or relief?

No need now for penance, and torture, and self-repression. She was free to please herself; to follow her own instincts; to give the rein to all the pent-up feelings of her passionate, impulsive nature.

I read no more. I was in a fever of impatience to reach my journey's end. Never had the hours seemed so long, the miles so many.

It was almost dark when I reached Templecombe. I sprang from the carriage and hurried into the hall. One look at the footman's face told me the news was known.

"My mistress wishes to see you at once," he said.

"How is she?" I asked, eagerly. "How does she bear it?"

"No one has seen her since she heard the sad news," the man answered. "She shut herself up, alone, in her boudoir, and has been there all day."

I walked upstairs and went straight to the well-remembered room, and knocked at the door.

"It is I, Miss Kate," I said, in answer to the faint, low query that reached me.

The door was flung open. In the dusk of the room I saw the well-known little figure; I caught one glimpse of a white, uplifted face, and eyes swollen and red with passionate weeping. Then—she was in my arms, sobbing like a child.

"Oh, Jane!" she cried. "Oh, dear old Jane. Thank Heaven you have come! Oh, tell me, is it a judgement, do you think? Is Heaven going to punish me for my wickedness? Oh! my poor, good, faithful John——"

Is there any understanding the ways of women?

Time passed on, and Miss Kate grew very grave and quiet. The news was authenticated at the shipping-office, and Mr. Carruthers's lawyer came down to Templecombe, and told her the contents of the will, and arranged all matters of business for her.

She kept the boys at home, and had a tutor for them, and it seemed to me that she had settled down into quiet content once more. She never mentioned the name of Mr. Tresyllion for three months after she had heard of her husband's death; but, one day, as I was in the boudoir taking some orders about the servants' hall from her, a letter and a card were brought in by the footman, who handed them to her. I saw her face turn rosy red, then she laid the card down, and went over to the window and read the letter.

I knew perfectly well who had written it. I waited quietly until she had finished. Presently she turned to me with a sort of appeal in her look and gesture.

"It is from him," she said, quietly. "He is staying at the village. He wants to know if I will receive him!"

"Yes!" I said, interrogatively.

"Oh, Jane!" she burst out in the old impetuous way, "why should I play the hypocrite! What is the use of pretending to you? Here—read this—say what you think I ought to do. You know the whole story—advise me, now."

I took the letter from her hand. It was not very long, and it began without any ceremony of address:

"I can keep silence no longer. I have respected your grief, and effaced myself, so that you should not think me intrusive; but these three months have seemed an eternity to me. The longing for one sight of your face, one touch of your hand, is becoming intolerable. Surely, you must know what I feel. Surely you cannot have forgotten the words I spoke to you last season? Why should we play the hypocrite to each other any longer? Have we not suffered and struggled enough? You took all that made life for me away with yourself last June. I don't ask for anything, yet, at your hands. Only that I may see you sometimes. Send a line—Yes or No—to the inn here, where I am staying at present. Always yours,

"REX TRESYLLION."

Her eyes—eager, humid, brilliant—rested on my face as I gave the letter back to her again.

"I think, Miss Kate," I said, "that it is rather—soon; but, after all, we know what is bound to happen, sooner or later. You may as well give him permission to call."

How lovely she looked, as the colour softly flushed her cheeks, and her eyes

fell in sudden shyness. I thought, if he had seen her then——

"It seems a long time since June," she said. "I—I cannot help being glad that he has not forgotten."

"Did you think that likely?" I asked.

"Sometimes I have thought it," she answered, slowly, and looking at the letter in her hands, with a soft tenderness in her eyes that was infinitely touching. "I hope it is not wicked to be glad that I may think of him now. I did suffer terribly, Jane, terribly. More than you or any human being can guess or imagine."

"My dear," I said, "I am not blaming you. We do not have many chances of happiness in this world—it is as well to take them when we can."

"Then I may write and tell him to call?" she said, appealingly—just, for all the world, as if she were a little child again, and I had the charge and control of her actions.

I laughed.

"Of course, Miss Kate," I said. "Only I should not let him stay on here, if I were you. You will have all the country round talking—and it is as well to be discreet. You are both young, after all; and a year's waiting won't harm either of you."

"No," she said. "I hope, Jane, you don't fancy I am thinking of marrying again in such indecent haste. Oh, no, no! I shall be perfectly content, now that I know he is true, and really cares, and that there is no wrong in my thinking of him. I don't ask or wish for more. I only wonder how I could ever have been foolish enough to think my life complete without—love."

She wrote her note, and I took it downstairs, and sent one of the servants to the inn with it, and that same evening Mr. Tresyllion came to call; so he did not waste much time.

I never saw anything like the radiance and loveliness of Miss Kate's face that night, when I went to her room in answer to the message brought by her maid.

"I had to send for you, Jane," she said. "I am too happy to keep silent, and I am afraid of betraying myself to the staid, sedate old domestics here. Oh, Jane! have I ever, ever lived before? I don't believe it. I am in love with life—with the whole world. I could sing like the birds at daybreak. There isn't room in my heart for half my joy. It is too much. I am too happy; and yet I wouldn't have

a hair's breadth less! How he loves me—how he has always loved me—even when he seemed false. But he never was, Jane! Not really—not in his heart. It has been always, always me—even from the first hour we met—never any other woman."

"That," I said, ungraciously, "is just what every man tells every woman, when he makes love to her."

"You are a sour, cross old thing," she said, laughing. "But I am too happy to listen to you. Happy! why it was worth all the pain, the doubt, the struggles, the torture of those two years, only to feel that thrill of heart as his hands touched mine; only to see that look in his eyes as they met my own; only to hear his voice tremble for very weight of feeling, as he spoke my name at last, with the right of love, and not—the fear of shame!"

She sank down, suddenly, on her knees and buried her face in the soft coverlet.

"Oh," she sobbed, brokenly, "I hope I am not wicked to love him so—to be glad because he loves me. I was a good wife to John. I did make him happy. He always told me that—always. And I've not forgotten him. I won't be a worse mother to his boys—because—because of this new tie. I think it is the relief that makes me so glad. The lifting of that awful, awful weight. And I am not going to marry in any haste, Jane. Not for two years, at least—if he will only let me wait—for, now I know he loves me and is true, nothing else seems to matter. I should be perfectly content, even if we were parted. I am so sure of him—so sure of myself."

And I thought, as I saw her kneeling there, with face upraised, and tear-dimmed eyes, and clasped hands pressed against her throbbing heart, that I never should see again on any human face the pure, and passionate, and utterly ecstatic happiness that shone through hers on that night.

But a chill presentiment of evil crept into my heart as I looked down at that lovely, radiant face. It seemed to say that she was too happy; that life had given her too much. Alas! alas! how soon, how fatally soon, I was to find that presentiment verified!

CHAPTER XXIV.

"LOVE FOUND—GAINED . . ."

MR. TRESYLLION stayed a week at the inn, and then went back to town.

He was quite right, I thought. It was

early days for the young widow to be receiving gentlemen visitors. And I knew what a country place was like, and how every one knew every one else's business better than their own, and that the smallest action becomes food for gossip. Miss Kate was not likely to escape. She was too pretty, too independent, too thoroughly indifferent to general opinion, and had never therefore been quite popular. The county magnates did not like the supreme contempt she showed for their opinions and prejudices, and the manner in which she rode, drove, walked, and visited just how and where she pleased. Then she was so young, such a girl in every way, and as likely as not to be romping with her boys in the garden when a carriage rolled up the avenue, instead of sitting in state in the drawing-room to receive visitors.

So I was glad Mr. Tresyllion was not bent on staying there to give occasion for more talk than usually abounded.

It is an odd thing that we spend so much of our lives in trying to avoid giving occasion for scandal—wondering what other people think and say of us, and yet neither the better nor the worse for their opinions, if we knew the real truth.

Miss Kate heard from her lover every day, and, I believe, answered him as frequently. She was not so restless and impetuous as she used to be. A sweet, contented happiness enfolded her, and there was no bitter mixed with the sweet now. Her nature seemed to unfold daily, and grow richer, fuller, deeper, more loveable in its absolute content with life.

To see her face when a letter from him arrived, was a study. The shy, sweet droop of eyelids over the betraying eyes; the soft blush; the happy little smile. And all day she would flit from place to place like a sunbeam, a snatch of some tender love-song falling from her lips, or a sigh of deep and pure content stirring the close and dusky folds of her morning-gown.

"He writes the most perfect letters, Jane," she would say to me.

"No doubt," I would answer. "If a poet who is a lover can't write good love-letters, I wonder who in the world can!"

Well, no need to dwell on this part of my story. Three months more passed, and the quiet content began to give place to a certain restlessness—and I was not at all surprised—when one day she asked me if I would go up to town with her. She

had business to attend to, and some necessary shopping, so she said, with a little conscious blush.

Of course I agreed, and we went off one morning, and in due time arrived at Grosvenor Street, where two rooms had been prepared for her according to her orders. Part of the house was still shut up; and she refused to have it opened, as she did not wish any of her fashionable friends to know she was in town.

She had left her maid behind her at Templecombe. There was only an old servant to cook and see to the house—and myself.

"I shan't stay more than three or four days," she said, the first evening we arrived, as I brought her some tea into the little library downstairs, where she had elected to sit and have her meals.

Just then the front-door bell rang; and I answered it, smiling to myself at the transparency of lovers' excuses.

Of course, it was Mr. Tresyllion. I showed him into the library, and went downstairs to the kitchen for another cup and saucer. Perhaps I sighed a little enviously, thinking of the rapture that meeting upstairs held. I gave them five minutes before returning with the cup. How happy they looked! and what a handsome pair they made! She so small and dainty, with her flushed cheeks, and big, soft eyes that fairly danced with happiness, and the dusky crown of her hair, catching all lights and shades from fire and lamp; and he handsomer than ever, I thought, with a proud and radiant look upon his face, and such a world of tender love in his eyes that the blindest person might have read his secret—yes, and envied it.

He remained all the evening; and looking at Miss Kate afterwards, I began to wonder how elastic a space of time the proposed four days would be. It is never easy to cut short one's delight with one's own hand.

Of course she stayed on, and week followed week, and still they could not tear themselves apart. Their love was the most absolute and perfect intoxication; and every day only seemed to ripen and intensify it.

There was the most complete and perfect sympathy between them—that entire magnetism of soul, sense, and nature which is so rare; but which, wherever it does exist, exceeds all other feelings. Never one hour of weariness, never a shadow on

either face, never anything but the tenderest comprehension, the most perfect companionship, the sweetness of welcome, the regret of parting.

I had read of such love in books. I had never imagined it could exist. But there was no doubt it did in this case. Not that Miss Kate was always the same, or less a "Lady of Moods" than her lover had called her in the old days that had seemed so hopeless and despairing.

Her variability was still her great charm; but it was sobered now by the depth and force of a feeling to which her nature had hitherto been a stranger.

"He actually seems to think I don't love him, Jane," she said to me one night as she sat before the mirror with her loosened hair about her, and her eyes looking back at her own reflection. "Not love him; fancy that! Ah! it is only because I love him too much; because I am afraid to let him see into the full depths of my heart, that I can deceive him so. Love him—as if that half expresses what he is to me! There seems to me no word that can say it; no song that could thrill with it; nothing in music, or speech, that can in any way convey the feelings of my heart now!"

She bent her head on her hands, and the veiling hair fell round her like a cloud. A little sob broke from her, startling and saddening to hear, as the outcome of those passionate words.

"It is too much," she cried, wildly. "I can't bear it—sometimes. It seems wicked, mad, idolatrous to care so intensely for one faulty human being. For I don't deceive myself, Jane. He is very far from perfect; but then, who am I to cavil at faults? Heaven knows I have my share, and more than my share; but when I think of him, when I look at him, when I hear his voice, when his arms hold me, it is just as if my heart's ecstasy would kill me from sheer excess of joy, and pain, and delight, and fear, all mingled and all one!"

"In that case," I said, in my most matter-of-fact manner, "I can only give you one piece of advice; get married as soon as ever your year of mourning has expired, and go abroad and live there for a while. Believe me, Miss Kate, there's nothing like a good sober dose of matrimony for curing romance, and you are making a hero and an idol out of a mere man after all. Handsome, I grant you—and clever, too—but only a man, Miss Kate; and a man is always capable of

inflicting the greatest amount of suffering upon the woman who loves him as you love Mr. Tresyllion."

"Yes," she said, slowly, "I often think I love him too much. It is unwise—almost, I fear, unwomanly—but you remember, Jane, what I once told you about 'letting myself go.' I fear I have done that at last. It seems as if I asked and desired nothing more of life now. But I am afraid; afraid of him, of myself, of my own happiness, of even the shadow of this coming separation. And he—he is always trying now to——"

She stopped abruptly. Her face grew scarlet as she lifted it and shook back the dark cloud of her hair.

"Oh, I never meant to say it," she panted. "Jane, why do you lead me on to speak of him?"

"Shall I finish the sentence, Miss Kate?" I asked. "It doesn't need any great cleverness—to marry him, and at once, I suppose. Well—why not?"

"Oh, Jane—I couldn't, I couldn't. It would seem so wrong, so forgetful, so—so hateful of us to do such a thing."

"You have both begun to think of it," I said, drily. "That is the first step. It is surprising how soon all the arguments will be 'for' instead of 'against.'"

"Oh no," she said, with sudden resolution. "They must be always 'against.' I am going away because I am afraid of listening—afraid of his entreaties and persuasions."

"You might marry him privately," I said.

"Are you a witch?" she cried, angrily. "Do you guess—do you know what he has been saying—every day of this last week?"

"I know you are both madly in love. It doesn't need much witchcraft to see that," I answered, "and I know what men are, as a rule. Mr. Tresyllion is young, passionate, adoring. He naturally finds every week a month, and every month a year, especially if you continue to keep him in a state of uncertainty about your own feelings."

"He will know them," she said, "some day—some day, when there will be no need of disguise or pretence. After all, Jane, he deserves a little punishment for his bad

treatment of me in the past. I am still jealous of that woman."

"Oh, my dear," I said, "no man is perfect, and very, very few are faithful. Believe that, and you will save yourself a deal of misery."

"Cruel, hard old Jane," she said, lifting her sweet eyes to my face. "But you can't make me doubt him now. I am too sure, and too happy. Oh, Jane, Jane," and she blushed suddenly over face and neck, "what a tale his eyes tell; just as he said to-night:

What's the earth,
With all its art, verse, music, worth,
Compared with love—found, gained, and kept."

"Poetry," I said, "is all very fine; but real life says different. The love may be found and gained; but I doubt its being 'kept' for very long. One or other warden—cools—forgets. Ah! my dear, I've seen so much of it—so much of it."

"Yes," she said, wistfully, "I can believe you have, Jane. But our love is going to be an exception. It has endured a pretty harsh ordeal. It has stood a cruel test. For myself I know I am sure. There is not the faintest doubt plucking at my heart. I love him, Jane—heart, and sense, spirit. He is all and everything to me—my very, very life. To lose him would be worse than death; a million times worse!"

"How can you love him so, and yet leave him in doubt as to your feelings?" I asked wonderingly.

"I wonder myself," she said. "But perhaps the very depth and strength of my love prevents my showing it. I am so still, so quiet, that he thinks me cold. Well," and she rose and shook back her hair, laughing the low, happy laughter of content, "well, Jane, he will know all in good time. Ah, it will be a 'good time,' as I used to say when I was a child. No memory to poison our kisses; no doubt to chill; no foreboding to part us any more. I often wonder if Heaven will let us be so happy. For you know, Jane, all the famous love histories of the world are unhappy, and have tragic endings."

But I laughed and cheered her, and smiles soon replaced the tears that were threatening to fall.

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CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

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BOOK II.

HOW THE STORY WENT ON.

THE REVEREND LOUIS DRAYCOTT'S DIARY.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR.

DECEMBER the thirty-first, 1879.—The last day of what has been to me a most eventful year. An eventful and exciting day, too, in itself. The sort of day that takes it out of a fellow—especially a fellow like me. It is odd how I seem to get inside these queer folk, among whom my lot and work is cast, and to be conscious of exactly what they are feeling; how all the side-lights play upon their lives for me, so that each separate life becomes a sort of drama, of which I am the witness—a witness so deeply concerned, that it seems to be all happening to myself.

Even now, through the hazy smoke of my pipe, I see the face of that poor fellow, John Mogeridge, as he watched his wife out of sight; the spasm that caught the muscles of his mouth; the clenched fists; the strangled cry through the set teeth; and then the bitter, bitter burst of weeping!

After all, how little the people who read newspaper reports of "cases"—murder and otherwise—can judge of the real state of matters! How little they can follow the tortuous windings; how little estimate the buffetings of storm, and wind, and tempest, through which the culprit has reached that

summit of misfortune, where he becomes visible to the prying eyes of his fellows! It is the man whose calling sets him—not above—but side by side with the sinner, in the supreme hours of retribution and despair, who can see things as they are—not as they seem to be.

The stream of one life runs quietly through pleasant pastures, between gently-sloping banks, and its current is clear, and calm, and still. Another foams along a rocky bed, beating madly against this obstacle and that; here swirling in giddy eddies above some gruesome depth; there compressed to a torrent by a narrowed channel, and hidden from the light of day by overhanging banks dense with poisonous flower and berry, and foul with blackened ooze, and iridescent slime.

As I write, two lives, marvellous in their sharp contrast, rise up before me.

First, there is old David Bramble, whom I visited the day before yesterday. He has been gate-keeper at the prison for so many years, that it makes one giddy to think of the endless procession of criminals he must have seen passing and re-passing that gloomy portal. He married, in early youth, a wise and faithful woman, who bore him healthy and good children, and died, at the age of sixty-five, crowned with every household virtue. David is now in his eighty-third year. His hair is snow-white, fine-spun, and falls on either side a face where grand and noble lines are graven. When I go to visit him, and ask him how things are with him, he answers me that he is "Easy, sir, easy." He is conscious of no pain; can listen to his little blue-eyed grand-daughter Tottie spell her way through a chapter in the Testament, or the newspaper, with content to

himself; enjoys his meals; and is now—so he tells me—looking forward to the “early cabbage” of spring—a favourite dainty.

With that charming candour so characteristic of their class, his family speak openly, in his presence, of his probable dissolution, and its probable kind. “He’ll go off suddint, at last, will father—like the snuff of a candle,” says the son George, who now keeps the gate. They always ask me to “say a bit of prayer with father;” and I do so. But I do not ask of Heaven that the old man may soon be “taken,” nor yet that he may quickly “enter into his rest.” I think he is very comfortable where he is, and earnestly hope he may be spared to enjoy those spring pleasures, upon which his honest old heart is set. When death comes, I doubt not, David will meet it with trust and courage; none the less so because he has enjoyed the gift of a long and prosperous life more than most.

From David Bramble to John Mogeridge is a long stretch—to some, doubtless, so long that they would never reach the other side. Imagination would fail them. The life, blackened by the worst of crimes, and ended by John Mogeridge, private in Her Majesty’s one hundred and fiftieth Regiment of the Line, being “hanged by the neck till he was dead,” would cause a shudder. The sensitive mind would shrink from the contemplation of such a spectacle. Even a man of very smirched life would shrink from John Mogeridge.

But I—knowing what I do of the life that has just gone out in darkness—I, who saw the tears of penitence upon the swarthy cheek, and heard the sighs that rent the breast of the sinner; I, who, learning more and more of the man’s temptations and troubles in my daily ministry; I, who traced the stormy course of a life which had had every adverse and sinister influence brought to bear upon it—I, Louis Draycott, gaol chaplain, feel differently.

It was not a very new or startling story, that of John Mogeridge. A drunken father, a dissolute mother, evil tendencies inherited, the “sins of the fathers visited on the children”—the old law that may seem unjust, but that is inexorable, and has its beautiful side and teaching, like all Heaven’s laws; for what so beautiful a thought, what so grand a prize to strive for, as the knowledge that by bringing ourselves into subjection, that by ourselves becoming manly, pure, and true, we may bequeath a heritage of bodily and

mental strength and health to those that shall come after! Evil tendencies are not the only tendencies that are immortal things, thank Heaven!

In the case of John Mogeridge, the evil bequeathed to him was mighty; the good, nil. He had to make the good side of his life for himself; and it was weaker than the bad side. When he “took the shilling,” he came across a bad companion, and got led astray. He took to “taking a glass too much,” which means many glasses. He saw the red rims round his wife’s eyes, but would not be warned by those home danger-signals.

He sold his kit; he sold the child’s shoes; just then he would have sold his soul for drink. The lurking demon in him was rampant. The selling of the little shoes was a domestic treachery of the blackest, and the red rims grew deeper, and the wife’s cheek sodden and pale.

The selling of the “kit” was another matter. It brought heavy and disgraceful punishment upon him. A few years back it would have brought him to the triangle, and scored his back with the livid ridges which the “cat” leaves as it passes. But these are more merciful days.

Still, Mogeridge suffered severely for his “spree,” and the blacking-brushes, and other items—all marked with the broad arrow—which had been found at the sign of the three balls. His state was bad; but not hopeless, since he still hated his own wrongdoing. It is when a man can think of his sins against himself, and others, with complacency, that hope languishes. He resolved to gather himself together and make a stand for the right. He determined to wipe away the red rims from his wife’s eyes with the hand of love and penitence.

But he found himself a “marked man.” A non-commissioned officer, smart, active, without human sympathies, incapable of gentle dealing with any, had come to great power in the company to which Mogeridge belonged. The Captain left everything to this man.

John Mogeridge had a hot time of it. He strove to do better, but his strivings were as those of one who fights with the air. The Sergeant would not permit the once-fallen man to rise. Nothing he did was right. Everything was wrong. His comrades jeered at him. Flunkeyism finds itself everywhere, from the Court to the alum. The men recognised their Captain as a “fainéant;” his Sergeant as a person that it were well to propitiate.

Mogeridge was "reported" for the most venial fault. On one occasion feeling ill upon the march, he asked leave to fall out. It was refused him. He staggered on, blind and dazed; the cold sweat beading on his forehead; his shako seemed a leaden weight, his stock strangled him; rebellious and evil thoughts began to surge and bubble in his mind. Hate—that father of murder—ran riot in his heart.

Later on he sought consolation at the canteen. Presently the drink clouded his poor brain, and, at the same time, fired his blood.

"You look loike as if yo' wur after no good, John Mogeridge," said a passing comrade, noting the bloodshot eyes and unsteady gait of the "marked man."

It seemed as though the wicked fancies surging within him clothed themselves in the man's scoffing words, taking visible and concrete form and shape: "No good"—was that what he was after?

Thirst for revenge raged in his soul, as thirst for the beer in his body. He visited the canteen again; again he met with jeers and scoffing.

"Art'er bound fur to kill some one?" said a man leaning up against the door, pipe in hand, tunic unbuttoned, and forage-cap on the back of his head. "You look loike it."

The words were carelessly spoken, and raised a laugh; but again they clothed a thought, giving it form and semblance.

"To kill"—an awful thought! The sweat breaks forth afresh upon his brow—a mist rises between his blurred vision and the world around it. Through it he sees his wife's face with the red rims round her eyes, and the children—Bobby always in trouble, and having to be slapped, but a bright and sturdy chap for all that; and the baby, sleeping as he had seen it last, with its little hand laid against the mother's breast.

Shall he go to them and kiss them one and all—for the last, last time?

He will not be fit to kiss them when next he sees them. Bessy herself will turn from him, and cower over the children to keep them from his touch.

No, she won't; she'll cling about his neck, laying the baby down to set her arms free first. She'll weep fit to break her heart.

Who talks of broken hearts? What does an odd one or so cracked, or even crushed to powder, matter?

Why should he, John Mogeridge, be

trampled upon as he is? Why should he not make them feel that he has some power left—that, like the insect beaten to the earth, he yet can sting?

He goes home; he finds the poor place Government is kind enough to call married quarters for one family, empty.

If only Bessy had chanced to be there, or even Bobby, happy in some atrocious delight of his own invention, just to catch Daddy by the leg, just to appeal, with little dirty hands, and begrimed yet laughing face, to the better nature, wholly dormant in the man, and overborne by the rampant lust of vengeance, and the instincts of the beast within him!

There is no word in all the English language so pregnant as that word "if." It takes only two letters to make it; it is easy to spell, and small to look at; but the chances or mis-chances of a lifetime may lie folded up in it.

"If" Bessy or Bobby had been there, things might have gone differently with John Mogeridge. As it was——

But here the poor fellow's own words rise to my memory, almost with an actual sound:

"I hardly knowed what I wanted, nor what I was after, till I saw my rifle lying handy——"

He lifted the weapon that thus came "handy" to the evil running riot within him; toyed with it; weighed it in his hands, as though it had been a friend of whom he sought to take counsel; then, slowly and deliberately, loaded it with ball.

He had still no fixed resolve, no absolutely settled design. The mist was still before his eyes—a shadowy thing, clouding and blurring his brain as well as his vision.

All the bad and cruel instincts, all the violent, uncontrollable passions which had been bequeathed to him along with the gift of life, flamed in his heart and in his blood.

What a picture, seen through the half-opened door—this man, with glazed and staring eyes, trembling hands, and face of ghastly pallor, wavering on the brink of crime—pushed by unseen hands towards the black gulf yawning at his feet!

Again his own words come to my mind—a voice from the dead:

"I didna' know what I wanted, Parson; but it wur summat, and it wur no good."

A moment more, and the lazy Captain—the man who left all the company's work

to his Colour-sergeant—came strolling across the square. He whistled softly as he went. He carried his sword under his arm, and had pushed his forage-cap to the back of his head, for the day was warm.

A slight noise caught his ear, and he turned, with a smile upon his face, towards the open door whence it came. Then, almost as he turned, he leapt near a foot into the air, and fell with a heavy thud, face downwards, on the stones.

When the guard rushed across to arrest Private John Mogeridge, the man stood, looking at his rifle that lay upon the ground—with the barrel still faintly smoking—trembling in every limb, and sobbing like a woman.

"I never seemed to know what I'd done, till I saw 'em lift 'im up, and 's po'r head fell back across the Sergeant's knee, so helpless-like. I knowed then—I knowed then—"

The choking, broken utterance of these words; the sobs that cut the words in two at last; the awful, despairing face of the man as he fell upon his knees; and I beside him, sobbing too.

What a memory it all is! . . . And now it is all over and done with—folded up as one might fold a garment and lay it by! And victim and murderer are both with God.

Best so; best so. For He alone can hold the balance justly, weighing all things. . . . It was beautiful that the mother of the murdered man should write a letter of pardon to John Mogeridge just before, in the cold, grey dawn of the year's last day, he paid the penalty of the old, old law—"a life for a life."

Such a letter, too! So tender, so pitiful; taking exquisite cognisance of the heart-broken penitence of the sinner, of which I had told her. It seemed to me a sacramental gift, that letter, as I laid it in the sin-soiled hand; something that held the gift of healing, as of old the touch of the Master's garment. How blurred it was with the murderer's tears; how crumpled with the kisses that he showered upon it; how snug it lay, wrapped in a handkerchief Bessy had given him, tucked into the bosom of his shirt, ere he set out on that last terrible march of his—from the cell to the scaffold! . . .

It is all over now; it will pass like the rest. After all, it is only part and parcel of the day's work that comes to one whose simple duty it is to minister to others.

As the jetsam and flotsam of this tur-

bulent sea of sorrow and pain, this storm of sin, and penitence, and death, I find Bessy and little Bobby: the former dazed and dumb with the weight of her anguish; the latter, full of inconvenient and urgent wonder as to "what has come of Daddy."

Good and charitable people have sent me various sums of money for the widow and children of John Mogeridge; so that want will not be added to sorrow. Bobby already rejoices in a new pair of boots, coming very high up the legs, and conferring much dignity on his small person, and has been three times turned back from tentative journeys to find Daddy and show him Bobby's "pitty noo boots."

I think Bobby's babble hurts Bessy cruelly now; but, like many another cross of thorns, it will bud, and blossom, and turn to flowers with time. I shall watch for the first smile that touches her poor, pale lips, evoked by some irresistible drollery on the part of the boy. That smile will be the first rift in her night of cloud and pain. So, even Bobby has his uses, though when he poked a hole in the end of the kettle-drum and was discovered with one eye glued to the aperture and the other screwed up close so as to give him a first-class focus, I have been told that the big drummer—autocratic sovereign over all the drums, great and small, magnificent in uniform and wrath—denounced him as a "useless varmint, as didn't never ought to have been set a-goin'."

Bobby said, with gulps, and chokes, and many bitter tears, that he was "Looking for the noise;" but I never heard if the drummer was mollified by this view of the case.

Perhaps, in spite of the drummer's verdict, Bobby is having his uses now.

Perhaps I am glad to write about him in this my journal, my sole friend and confidant, just because he is a point of light in the universal gloom. I suppose one must feel wretched and sore after such a time as I have passed through of late. At all events, my nerves must have suffered somewhat in the process; for, whichever way I look, I meet the eyes of Private John Mogeridge as they met mine, just as the hand of the executioner was drawing the white cap across their light; putting it out for ever. The lips—last seen of all the set and grey-white face—moved, though no sound escaped them.

Yet I knew—I said "Amen." "God be merciful to me a sinner," was the

prayer heard of God, though not of man, in that supreme and awful moment.

Rather would I say :

"God be merciful to us all sinners!" and cry "Amen," with bowed head and covered face. My own record-sheet is not so clean that I can afford to separate myself and stand aloof from the man who died this morning, in the early dawn of the year's last day. For hate takes many forms, and killing does not always stand in need of knife, or poison-cup, to make it murder.

Louis Draycott, why are you "harking back" like this, instead of looking straight before you? It is against all rule; it is a breach of contract—with yourself. I suppose it is the worn-out feeling that follows a long-continued strain that makes me inclined to be morbid to-night, and to take to looking back into the grave, sad faces of past sorrows. These rooms of mine, though the matron is inconceivably respectable, are certainly not lively; nor can a blank wall be regarded as a cheerful prospect, even when a tank and a withered specimen of the ivy plant are thrown in. I suppose I might inhabit pleasanter rooms; but these had an odd sort of attraction for me. I like to see the prison itself looming big and dark all round me. It is having one's work handy. I like to think of all the mass of sin and sorrow hidden there, and—perhaps I cheat myself in this—fancy that my own suffering has taught me the trick of tenderness towards the sufferings of others; that my own miserable failure in the day of trial has taught me gentleness towards the failures of others.

These things may be so, or may not. I can but toil and hope. I can but pray that they may be so.

But to-night I am out of sorts—unhinged—physically weak. I need a mental tonic of some sort. Perhaps I had better take Ella's letter. Let me see—what is it she says?

"I know your dislike to making new acquaintances—nay, even to keeping up old ones; but in this case, I do think, my dear brother, you might make an exception."

"In this case"—that means in the case of these people of the name of Birt, who live in an out-of-the-way suburb of London—"Miss Birt was so good to 'dearest Janey,' when she had her bad accident at Weston-super-Mare, and I promised you should call."

So, because Miss Birt was good to Janey (is the lady eighty or eighteen?), Ella

promises and vows strange things in my name; and I am to break into my rule of life, attire myself in the best mode I can, and present myself at Prospect Place, N.W. "You are expected," says Ella, further on.

Well—I will go.

And for this reason. If this lady—be she old, or young, or middle-aged—was "so good" to heedless Janey when she slipped on a round stone on the shore and put her precious ankle out, she, the lady, must have a kind heart.

Now I want some woman with a kind heart to take an interest in Bessy and little Bob. There are sorrows that need a more delicate hand than mine to assuage their bitterness; and women understand each other's griefs better than any man can ever do. I argue thus—if the said Miss Birt was "so good" to "dearest Janey," ergo, she will have it in her to be "so good" to Bessy and Bob.

At all events, I cannot begin the new year better than by calling upon such a paragon.


There—it is begun already; and solemn enough sounds each stroke of midnight as it rings out over the great city.

We know what the year that has passed has brought us; but it calls for a deeper faith to lay the year that is coming at God's feet, and say: "Do with me as Thou wilt—only forsake me not. . . ."

TELEGRAPHY IN CHINA.

OF those home readers who, at the beginning of this decade, took a kindly interest in the opening of telegraph lines in China, only a very few were vaguely conscious of the existence of any difficulty other than the obstinate Conservatism of the Chinese authorities and people. If the Peking Government would but approve of telegraphs in principle, or better, would decide to construct a telegraph line for their own convenience, it was felt that the only other apparent obstacle—the fear with which the country folk regarded the intrusion of mysterious posts and wires among their graves and fields, and the prejudices of the bigoted "lettrés" against anything of foreign origin—would soon disappear or be suppressed. It was hardly imagined that, when wires and posts were ready, and batteries and operators in position, there would be any trouble in transmitting a Chinese message. In China,

however, among the foreigners to whose energy and perseverance the introduction of the telegraph into that very backward and exclusive country was due, the intrinsic difficulties of this performance had long been sorrowfully admitted, and laborious preparations made to circumvent them.

The "fons et origo mali," in this case, was the fact that the Chinese language has no alphabet; has, indeed, scarcely advanced beyond the picture-writing which we, in the West, abandoned some three thousand years ago. To this day a Chinaman, who wishes to write the word for "sun," has no other resource but to draw what is, in effect, a picture of it, thus, 

The forty or fifty thousand words that go to make up the Chinese language are not, however, all written on this simple principle. By far the larger portion of them are made up of two elements—one of which consists of a symbol, or rude picture (such as the above) of the genus to which the word belongs, the other of a character giving (in many cases only approximately) the sound.

The first element is called, by foreign writers on the subject, the "radical;" the second, the "phonetic." Of these radicals there were once five hundred and forty-four, and there are still the sufficiently appalling number of two hundred and fourteen; while sinologues recognise no fewer than one thousand and forty phonetics.

Now it will be at once clear that no system of telegraphing could possibly undertake to provide two hundred and fourteen plus one thousand and forty, or one thousand two hundred and fifty-four distinct signs, independently of the fact that, in some cases, it makes all the difference whether the phonetic precedes or follows the radical, or is written above or below it. It never was, as far as I am aware, ever seriously proposed to use so cumbersome a system. An analogous method, however, was once gravely suggested. Although the Chinese characters are arranged under one or other of these two hundred and fourteen radicals, still, in the writing, they require, by native computation, only nine different kinds of strokes; and in any given character these strokes are—barring private fads on the writer's part—always written in the same order, just as a child, in forming the letter "a," is taught to make the "o" first and the pot-hook afterwards. To take as an example the character for "sun," given

above. It is written in four strokes: first the perpendicular line on the left, then the right-angled hook forming the top and right sides, then the central horizontal line, and lastly, the line at the base.

Dr. Macgowan, as early as 1851, proposed to have a dial-plate constructed marking the nine strokes, and to spell out each character stroke by stroke. If those original nine strokes were represented by a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, then the character for sun would be telegraphed "fcbb." The difficulties in the way, however, were first, that the succession of strokes in all characters is not as easy as in this particular one; and secondly, that, as a character may contain any number of strokes from one to forty, an average of some fifteen or sixteen strokes would have to be indicated on the dial-plate for every Chinese word transmitted. Those, it is needless to say, were the days before the Morse system of expressing letters by dots and dashes had replaced the old dial.

But, it will be objected, if, as you say, every Chinese character has its sound, why should not such sound be represented according to the Roman alphabet, and so transmitted? Transliterate, and your difficulty should vanish. But it only begins. This same character for "sun" is read in Peking, "zhìh;" in Shanghai, "nih;" in Central China, "i;" in Amoy, "jit;" in Canton, "yat." It forms the Chinese and Japanese symbol for the first syllable of Japan, where it is properly read "Ni," or "Nip." How, then, could a Pekingese, who should Romanise his sound for the picture "sun," into "zhìh," hope to be understood by a Cantonese, who pronounced it "yat"?

Every official in the empire, however, speaks a "lingua franca," which occupies much the same place in China, as compared to the local patois, as the so-called "Tuscan dialect" does, or did, in Italy. This "lingua franca" we foreigners call "mandarin," the natives, "kuan hua." Could not advantage be taken of this fact? Very possibly, in good time; but at present there are numerous stumbling-blocks.

An enthusiastic advocate of telegraphy by transliteration, writes in the "Chinese Recorder" of November, 1887, that, "the only practicable solution to the question: 'How can China inaugurate a new and practical system of telegraphy?' is by the Romanisation of her official dialect."

But quite apart from the fact that "zhìh" is good "mandarin" for the "sun" in

Peking and "i" in Canton, there is one terrible fact to be borne in mind. The Chinese written language contains upwards of forty-four thousand different symbols, though, for most purposes, seven thousand or eight thousand are more than ample, and five thousand suffice for ordinary use.

But in the official dialect of Peking there are only four hundred and twenty distinct sounds; and for "mandarin" generally, Dr. Williams—the great authority on these points—declares that "the actual number of syllables to be written with our letters, is four hundred and sixty, and of these, several are indistinguishable." If then we take four hundred and fifty as the number of separate sounds, and confine ourselves to the five thousand ordinary characters, it is clear that each sound will have to do duty for eleven characters on an average.

It is true that the Chinese have a system of tones whereby they contrive to distinguish between, for instance, "shih" (to lose); "shih" (an affair); and "shih" (the time); but, in Pekingese, there are only four of these, and in "Southern Mandarin" only five, so that the addition of letters to discriminate these, as "shihv," "shihy," or "shihw," though undoubtedly a step in the right direction, would obviously not afford a sufficient distinction.

The enthusiast of the "Chinese Recorder," however, makes his whole proposition ridiculous by advocating "the dropping of the tone marks, which for this purpose are not only unnecessary, but an incumbrance." Anyway, as I have said already, the Chinese are not ripe for this system yet; though I believe it, or something like it, may well be adopted in the future.

Nor are they prepared for the next most sweeping alternative; that they (the whole nation, mind you) should "learn English before they can use the telegraph." English is spoken by every foreigner in China, except a few Catholic Missionaries, and here and there a Frenchman or two (for a Frenchman will not willingly drop his fixed idea of the universal obligation to speak French). And there is an ever-increasing number of Chinese who speak it, usually in "pidgin" form, but of late years often idiomatically. Still these last are as but a drop in the ocean of Chinamen, who know no language but their own; and of the native officials, who chiefly use the telegraph now, not one in a thousand knows a word of English—and the thousandth is half ashamed of his acquisition.

How do the Chinese, themselves, spell? Is there no native method of spelling words which might be availed of for transmitting sounds without using the objectionable foreign characters? There is; by taking two known words to give the sound of an unknown third. Thus, supposing the sound of the English word "fen" to be found. If the pronunciation of the words "foe" and "ten" were known, "fen" would be given as "foe-ten;" the initial of the one and the final of the other being combined into a new sound. It would be unnecessary, of course, to use more than one character for each initial, or final. Of initials in the Pekingese dialect there are twenty-five, and of finals, forty-three, so that it was suggested (by Doctor Hobson) that by means of twenty-five plus forty-three, that is sixty-eight, characters it would be possible to telegraph altogether in Chinese. But the process, though, as conforming to a native system, it would be more easily understood and used by the Chinese, has many objections which it would be tedious to discuss here.

The Comte d'Escayrac de Lauture advocated, in 1862, the most ingenious system till then proposed. He based it upon the fact, that Chinese is written by means of symbols, which symbols have no inherent, or necessary sound. To bring up again the much-enduring character for "sun." If the nations generally regarded this as the emblem, or symbol, of the Sun, it would be universally understood, though in Paris it would be read "soleil," and in Peking "zhih." An actual case in point is the first of our numerales, 1 or I. This is recognised all the world over as meaning unity, though a German would read it "ein," and a Spaniard "un." Consequently, as Doctor Williams says: "If there were a possibility, or use, in a universal language in which mankind could convey their thoughts irrespective of the sound of the symbols, the Chinese seems the best fitted for it;" is, in fact, he might have said, the only one fitted for it. This fitness struck the Count, chiefly because it led up to one of those paradoxes in which a French writer delights. Chinese possesses no grammar, as Westerners understand the word, its place being taken by what sinologists call "position;" very much, in short, as is the case in English. Just as there is, from the point of view of both men and bears, a very radical difference between "men kill bears," and "bears kill men," so there is in the corresponding

Chinese. A Chinese character can belong to any part of speech; so that when one, what we should usually consider a noun, immediately precedes another it becomes an adjective, or, what is essentially the same thing, a noun in the possessive case; just as we say "a gold ring," "a jade base." The construction of Chinese sentences being so simple, the Count considered that they might pass current throughout the world (as, indeed, they might, and possibly may) but for the complicated shapes of the characters. For these he proposed to substitute a series of groups formed by combinations of the first four numerals, as thus:

Chinese	}	Wo	ming	zhih	pu	lai
(Pekingese)						
Comte de	}	2,2343	2,23433	2,44442	2,12	2,3441
Lauture						
English		I, me	next	day	no,	not come

In this way he claimed (this was the paradox he was working up to) that "any European might enter into communication with a people whose language he neither speaks nor reads." His path, however, was beset with brambles. Even in the very simple sentence given above, the Chinese word "ming" only means "next," in this particular phrase "ming zhih," "to-morrow;" ordinarily, it signifies "brightness."

Nevertheless, to the Comte de Lauture's fanciful suggestion is largely due the present actual method of telegraphing in Chinese. The Count employed, as has been seen, combinations of the first four numerals to represent his Chinese characters and be the vehicle for transmitting them. Ten years after the appearance of his brochure, a Monsieur Viguier, of the Chinese Maritime Customs, published, in 1874, the scheme which, when the Tientsin-Shanghai line was opened, in December, 1881, was found to form the method by which messages were sent. It has been seen that Chinese characters are arranged in Chinese dictionaries under two hundred and fourteen radicals, which follow one another according to the number of their strokes. Monsieur Viguier took the seven or eight thousand characters in most common use, and, arranging them by this system, placed against the first one the number 0001, against the second 0002, and so on. It will be evident that, by using all the ten numerals, from 0 to 9, he could, in this way, make 9,999 groups of four figures each: that is, could represent 9,999 characters.

When the "New Code for Chinese Telegrams" appeared, it was found that a total of 7,689 characters was considered sufficient; but the last edition of the Code published, contains a supplementary list of 599, bringing the number of Chinese words that can be telegraphed up to 8,288. The answer, then, to the question with which we started, "How do you telegraph in Chinese?" is this: "By means of an open cypher code, in which every character is represented by a group of four figures."

Of course, this system supposes that every sender and receiver of a telegram is provided with a copy of the Code, and that the sender, at all events, knows how to find a word under its radical. As, roughly speaking, nearly eight per cent., or more than one-thirteenth, of the characters are not easily assigned to any particular radical; as each copy of the Code costs twenty cents—a consideration to your cheeseparer Chinaman—and as Carlyle's ill-natured dictum about people and fools holds good as much in China as elsewhere, it is not to be expected that telegraphy in China has become, as yet, of very general use. The officials telegraph a great deal; but in their case the manipulating of the figures is done by the telegraph clerks, so they don't mind. Imagine what an infinitude of trouble there would be in England, if every one not only, as now, could telegraph in code, but was obliged to so telegraph! A better parallel would be, if the only means of sending a telegram in England were by looking up in, say Routledge's edition of "Nuttall's Pronouncing Dictionary," each word, and by writing in the message form instead of it, the number of the page, of the column, and of the line, in which that word occurred!

Still, what alternative has the Chinaman? One advantage of his system is that a secret message can very easily be sent. As the instructions in his Code Book tell him, all he has to do is to add or subtract a number, or a series of numbers, agreed on beforehand between him and his correspondent, and the cypher is complete. One disadvantage—apart from the unavoidable clumsiness of the whole arrangement—it possesses, is that the different cable companies have agreed to consider a group of three figures as one word, so that if his message had to pass over a foreign line, he would have to pay double for it. This was originally intended to be the case with his own Administration

—I have quite forgotten to say, that it was the Danish Great Northern Telegraph Company that acted as foster-mother to the young Chinese Administration, and supplied it with rules—and to meet the difficulty, an alternate method of telegraphing was proposed, by means of combinations of the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet taken three at a time. That is, the first Chinese character (the word for "one") could be written either 0001 or AAA, the second 0002 or AAB, and so on. By this method—as the curious in such matters will easily ascertain—17,576 characters could be represented.

The Chinese Administration, however, thought better of their design to make Chinamen pay at the rate of three figures to the word, and so the alphabetical system became useless in China. And it was, from the beginning, useless outside China, because the cable companies had laid down the somewhat arbitrary rule that, though they would take combinations of figures, they would take none of letters that formed no recognised word in any of the leading European languages.

One remedy for this hardship forms, in fact, a new mode of telegraphing. It is the substitution for the four-figure groups at present used, of a selection of words from the eight languages allowed for code messages in the Far East—English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Japanese, and Latin. For simplicity's sake, they might be words of four letters only, since these eight languages could easily supply the nine thousand or so required. English words, for example, ABED, ZONE, should be chosen by preference, since every clerk at the now numerous telegraph stations in China can, at all events, read English. If these did not suffice, French terms should be called in, and after them Latin. The objection to the arrangement is that it would require a Chinese sender to learn the order of the English alphabet, and, perhaps, the proper way of forming English letters. But to a Chinaman accustomed from infancy to learn long and almost meaningless—in infancy, quite meaningless—lists of words by heart, and to commit to memory the complicated forms of thousands of characters, our alphabet would be child's play. I said "perhaps" to learn to write our letters. For in the earlier edition of the Chinese Code, which gave an arrangement by letters, the compilers had printed, at the top of every page, the alphabet, and under

each letter a Chinese character which was supposed to represent its sound. Few of these were, indeed, more than the merest approximations. E and U were exactly reproduced, R sufficiently well for an Englishman, and P and T for an Irishman; but some of the others were very much out of it. X was represented by the sh sound in hush, H by the eh of church, W was read hu, J, zhan, while for Z the compiler could get no nearer than tē, a sound we cannot get near at all. Still, the characters were really only signs; and, as such, would have served their purpose, doubtless, had not the easier alternative of using numerals driven them from the field.

But what we are engaged on is less Chinese telegraphy as it might be, than Chinese telegraphy as it is. I have tried to show how a Chinaman, telegraphing with the means at present at his disposal over foreign lines, is at a disadvantage as far as the cost is concerned. In China itself this difficulty has been met and guarded against. The charge for Chinese telegrams passing entirely over Chinese wires is exactly one-half the charge for foreign telegrams similarly circumstanced. This regulation, regarded from the point of view of foreigners, changes aspect the more it is looked at, like the question at which end a cheroot should be smoked. At first sight the rule appears reasonable; for a Chinaman, as we have seen, is handicapped by having to use, as it were, two cypher words for each character. Over Chinese lines, however, four figures count nowadays as only one word, so that the Chinaman is on the same footing as a European, who, in his turn, is handicapped by having to pay twice as much. The proceeding now seems to savour of protection; but a little more experience shows that matters are not so unequal, since, where an Englishman writes Shanghai as one word, a Chinaman is obliged to write it in two, as Shang-hai. To telegraph "British Consul, Tientsin," three words, would require six, if not seven, Chinese characters. The Chinese language, however, can be as concise as the best telegraphic English; and, on the whole, the regulation would distinctly favour the Chinese if it were not for this difficulty of the address—for all addresses must be paid for. That, it may be thought, could easily be got over by the device, common enough now in England, of registering it beforehand at the different telegraph offices. The

Chinese Administration did, indeed, at first adopt the scheme in its European form by allowing two characters to be registered as an address; but they have since largely deprived it of its usefulness by insisting that five characters at least must be employed, in addition, it would seem, to the name of the station.

Other rules and regulations affecting the cost of telegrams in China are these. The minimum length of a telegram—including the address—is taken at seven characters; that is to say, the least number of words a sender will be charged for is seven. He may write less, but he will have to pay all the same; just as in England, in the old shilling telegram days, you paid a shilling whether your message consisted of one word or of twenty. If the sender, or receiver, of a Chinese message cannot understand it in its code, or four-figure form—an extremely probable circumstance—he can get it transliterated by the telegraph-clerks for an additional payment. If the sender has not spaced out his telegram into fours, but has written the figures continuously, then three figures will be taken as one word, and the message charged at foreign (double) rates. He may write his four-figure groups either in Chinese numerals or in foreign; but he must introduce no foreign letters, at the risk of being charged double.

The rest of the rules are, in the main, a translation from those of the Great Northern Company. One or two are indigenous. Credit is only to be given to Cabinet Ministers, Ministers of the Foreign Office, Tartar Generals, Viceroy, and Governors in the provinces, and Ambassadors, or Ministers of Legation. Apparently this rule, which was originally issued in 1881, became abused, for Li Hung-chang had subsequently to call the attention of officials to it, and insist on the prepayment of messages by all except the privileged few. The Administration will not transmit any telegram which is seditious, libellous, or calculated to do harm, though they remark, somewhat naïvely, that if the message is in cypher, and so unintelligible, they will forward it, but must decline to take the consequences. Office hours are, in the spring and summer, from seven a.m. to nine p.m., and in autumn and winter from eight a.m. to ten p.m. These hours, though easier than in the Great Northern Company, are not always rigidly adhered to. I called one afternoon at a certain

station, and was shown by the operator over the premises, which being then new, were still clean and neat. They consisted of two or three small courts, a garden with a little pavilion; a reception-room, and the operator's own office and quarters. These operators have been trained, most of them, at Tientsin or Shanghai, at schools to which admission is obtained by open competition. Some, however, are cadets educated in America. Here and there a foreigner, almost always a Dane, and sometimes an ex-officer of the Danish army, is stationed to give advice and assistance in repairing and working the lines, which have been, nearly without exception, laid by him, or his fellow-countrymen—often at considerable personal risk. But I am forgetting my operator. He showed me his instruments, and gave me the copy of the rules from which I have just been quoting. I ventured to remark that he was not very busy; to which he agreed, observing that he found the place duller, but very much healthier, than Shanghai, or, indeed, than America. The next morning about half-past eleven, I met a foreign friend coming away from the telegraph office in some excitement. When he grew calm enough to be coherent, he said that he had taken his telegram, too important to entrust to a casual coolie, to the station himself. He got there at eleven, and finding no one about walked straight into the office. There was no one there either, but he noticed a half-open door for which he made. Climbing some stairs he found himself in the operator's bedroom, where lay the operator, sleeping calmly, almost benignly. The foreigner coughed; the operator awoke. The foreigner produced his watch and the telegram. The operator took in the whole situation, and proved more than equal to it. He waited till his indignant visitor had paused for breath, then said slowly and distinctly: "You'd better git chop chop; I've taken measles." That was some years ago, and nowadays, though they do not speak American quite as well, they get up earlier. Indeed, if the wires would not break quite so often, and if some less clumsy method of transmission could be devised, there would be little to complain of now in Chinese Telegraphy.

A FORGOTTEN WORTHY.

It is curious to observe by what accidental, and often trivial, circumstances the

names of some men are handed down to posterity, and with what unexpected associations the fame of others becomes involved. The name of Dr. Guillotin is for ever associated with the ghastly apparatus that he invented; but by which—popular legend notwithstanding—he did not meet his death. “Hobson’s choice” has immortalised the Cambridge carrier on whom Milton wrote a solemnly jocular epitaph. The “*Diverting History of John Gilpin*,” although at first published anonymously, and, when acknowledged, cold-shouldered by its author, has yet carried the name of William Cowper into many hundreds of homes, where the poet’s serious and more ponderous works are unknown. Jonas Hanway was a traveller and a philanthropist. He wrote volumes of travels to places so diverse as St. Petersburg and Portsmouth, Astrachan and Kingston-on-Thames. He founded the Marine Society, which still pursues its beneficent career of rescue, and helped largely in the establishment of the Foundling Hospital. But, so far as he is remembered at all, he is only known as the first man who walked the streets of London with an unfurled umbrella, and as the determined foe of that popular beverage—tea.

Hanway was born at Portsmouth in 1712. He served an apprenticeship to business at Lisbon, and in 1743 started from London to take up a partnership in a mercantile house at St. Petersburg. The journey was made by sea, and occupied the greater part of two months. In the autumn of the same year the traveller set out on his long and adventurous expedition to open up a trade between St. Petersburg and Persia by caravan route, the River Volga, and the Caspian Sea.

The book that Hanway wrote, on his return to England in 1750, descriptive of his travels, contains many curious details of Russian trading life and habits. The caravans travelled from St. Petersburg to Moscow at the rate, in the winter, of about forty-seven English miles a day. In summer they made shorter stages. The procession was long and straggling, and much exposed, on the banks of the Volga, to attacks from the Kalmucks. “A hundred carriages,” he says, “take up two-thirds of a mile in length, so that, when no horseman is at hand to spread the alarm, the rear might be easily carried off. They have not even a trumpet, horn, or other instrument for this purpose; they trust in Providence, and think any care of this

kind unnecessary, though the neglect has sometimes proved of fatal consequence.”

From Tzaritzin, on the Volga, the journey was continued by water to the Caspian Sea. The boats procurable for transport were extraordinary craft. Their decks were loose pieces of the bark of trees, and long strips of bark were nailed over the wide seams to keep the rotten caulking—or “corking,” as Hanway spells it—from tumbling out. Pitch and tar were almost unknown, and the boats were kept afloat by a specially-erected baling or scooping apparatus. On the way down, the convoy met the messengers of the Russian Empress, travelling with grapes from Astrachan to the Imperial Court. A box of these grapes made this journey every three days during the season. It was carried by two horses, litter-wise, and had to travel twelve hundred miles before reaching its destination.

Hanway was struck by the appearance and nature of the soil about Baku—a place which, in recent times, has become the centre of an immense petroleum industry. “If a cane,” he says, “or tube even of paper, be set about two inches in the ground, confined and closed with earth below, and the top of it touched with a live coal, and blown upon, immediately a flame issues, without hurting either the cane or the paper, provided the edges be covered with clay, and this method they use for light in their houses, which have only the earth for the floor; three or four of these lighted canes will boil water in a pot; and thus they dress their victuals.”

Hanway returned to England from Russia, travelling overland, in 1750, and, having made a fortune sufficient for his modest needs, he lived contentedly upon it, and betook himself to literature. His first production was a bulky account of his travels, of which several editions were sold. In London he very soon became a conspicuous figure by his introduction of the umbrella as part of the outdoor equipment of a gentleman. Before this time, the use of this article was confined to women, and it was considered effeminate in a man to uplift the cumbrous erection. In the “*Female Tatler*” of the twelfth of December, 1709, there is a satirical notice that “The young gentleman belonging to the Custom House, that for fear of rain borrowed the umbrella at Will’s Coffee House in Cornhill, of the Mistress, is hereby advertised that, to be dry from

head to foot on the like occasion, he shall be welcome to the maid's pattens." Hanway introduced umbrellas of pure silk, lighter than had formerly been used, and, despite the jeers and gibes of the street-boys, and especially of the chairmen, who saw their craft in danger, succeeded in bringing them into general use.

Soon after his return from Russia, Hanway wrote several pamphlets on the Naturalisation of the Jews, a measure that he strongly opposed, and in 1756 he published his "Journal of Eight Days' Journey from Portsmouth to Kingston-on-Thames." To a second edition of this work, published the following year, he added his "Essay on Tea, considered as pernicious to Health, obstructing Industry, and impoverishing the Nation." This was no new doctrine. The use of tea had been attacked by a Dutch writer so early as 1695, and a few years later by a German physician, Dr. Co-hausen. Only nine years before Hanway published his "Essay," John Wesley had printed a pamphlet entitled, "A Letter to a Friend concerning Tea," in which the author says that tea impairs the digestion, unstrings the nerves, involves waste of money, and induces symptoms of paralysis—a truly formidable indictment. A certain good lady, a disciple of Hanway, Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh, endowed, about 1760, an almshouse near Wigan, and one of her rules was: "I do positively forbid the inhabitants of the house to use any foreign tea known by the names of Bohea and Green, and if any of them persist in drinking it, or expending money for that purpose, they shall be dismissed. Those who can afford to indulge themselves in an article so unnecessary and expensive, so destructive both to time and health (the tea such persons must drink being a sort of poison), I shall not allow them to be proper objects of this charity."

Hanway's book made some stir. Dr. Johnson reviewed it in the "Literary Magazine," and, shameless tea-bibber that he was, naturally trod heavily on the author's anti-Bohea theories. With reference also to the "Eight Days' Journey," the Doctor remarked that "Jonas acquired some reputation by travelling abroad; but lost it all by travelling at home." Goldsmith reviewed the "Essay" in the "Monthly Review," and laughed at the attack on the tea-pot. "The suppression of this dangerous custom," Hanway had written, "depends entirely on the example of ladies of rank in this country . . . some,

indeed, have resolution enough in their own houses to confine the use of tea to their own table, but their number is so extremely small, amidst a numerous acquaintance I know only of Mrs. T, whose name ought to be written out in letters of gold." Upon this, Goldsmith quietly remarks: "Thus we see how fortunate some folks are. Mrs. T. is praised for confining luxury to her own table; she earns fame and saves something in domestic expenses!" Mindful of his earlier experiences as a practising physician, Goldsmith condemns with professional gravity and importance some of the medical theories expounded by Hanway in his book. "The reader may judge," says the "Monthly" reviewer, in conclusion, "which will be most conducive to either mental or bodily health, the watery beverage of a modern fine lady, or the strong beer and stronger waters of her great-grandmother."

It was about this time that Hanway took part in the establishment of that noble charity, the Marine Society, which has supplied our Navy and Mercantile Marine with so many thousands of trained sailors, rescued as boys from the miseries and perils of the streets. A portrait of Jonas, painted by Edward Edwards, hangs in the present committee-room of the Society. Hanway also took a great interest in the Foundling Hospital, and founded in London a Magdalen Hospital.

The "caccēthes scribendi" now fairly possessed the philanthropist, and, during a long course of years, Hanway wrote many books, and still more pamphlets, on every conceivable subject. In 1760, stimulated probably by the production, in the preceding year, of Townley's famous farce, "High Life Below Stairs," he attacked, in a brace of pamphlets, the absurd and oppressive custom of feeding, or giving "ralls" to, servants. Two years afterwards the value of his philanthropic efforts was recognised by the Prime Minister, Lord Bute, who appointed him one of the Commissioners for victualling the Navy. Jonas now wrote more than ever; but always having the good of his fellow-creatures in view. He wrote on the "Uses and Advantages of Music," "Meditations on Life and Practical Religion," "An Account of the Society for the Encouragement of British Troops in Germany and North America," "Advice to a Daughter, on her going to Service," "The Christian Officer," and many other similar subjects. He took up the cause of the

poor little chimney-sweepers, and brought some of their cruel employers to book.

In 1774 he issued, in two thick volumes, a work on "Virtue in Humble Life," and in the following year a large quarto on "The Defects of Police, the Causes of Immorality, etc." A list of his writings in the following years would only weary the reader. Until his death he remained an indefatigable scribbler, and wrote on a great variety of subjects, principally religious and social. In 1783 we get a glimpse of him, at a dinner party, in Madame D'Arblay's "Diary." She describes him as "very loquacious, extremely fond of talking of what he has seen and heard, and would be very entertaining, were he less addicted to retailing anecdotes and reports from newspapers." In 1786 his health broke down, and on the fifth of September, having put on a fine ruffled shirt, and disposed of some small personal belongings, he had his will read to him, and then gently and calmly died.

SOME NATIONAL LOSSES.

It is one of the penalties of civilisation that, in its progress, many things highly curious, interesting, and valuable must inevitably be swept away. Every age has its own peculiar drift or tendency—whence arising, it would be difficult to say, but nevertheless, unmistakable and inevitable. Every person, thing, or institution which may chance to be in opposition to that drift, eventually has to go; and that is why many types of human character, once common, are at this moment as extinct as the dodo, and only known to us through the medium of books and of tradition.

Of the great majority of these, it may be said, in the apt words of Mr. W. S. Gilbert, that, "They'd none of them be missed." They had their origin, and obtained their ascendancy in an age more tolerant of absurdity, and more lenient to the vices of the great than this, when every personage, however exalted, is merely permitted to retain his position by the favour of the public. "I rejoice," said the great Arnold of Rugby to a friend, as they stood to watch the white smoke of a passing railway-train, in the early days of steam-traffic, "I rejoice to think that feudalism has gone by for ever." The speaker did not long survive that utterance; and could he return to earth now, he would surely be amazed to witness the complete and, so

far as this fortunate country is concerned, bloodless revolution which has transformed the social fabric.

First, and foremost, the Fine Lady—in the strict and odious sense of the phrase—has disappeared, it is to be hoped for ever. In this country she never attained the full developement of heartless wickedness which disgraced her sex in France before the Revolution—but she was bad enough. She was a superfine person of whom but few of this generation have happily had much experience; languid, supercilious, insolent, and a veritable caricature of womanhood. She never read anything, or did anything, or said anything sensible. Airs and graces of the most absurd kind were her sole accomplishments. She lived only for homage and admiration, and looked down upon those beneath her as mere clods and worms—too vile even to serve as footstools for her aristocratic feet. Fine ladies we have still, it is true, but surely none who would dare to avow the crass ignorance, the unfeeling selfishness, the overweening vanity which characterised those of sixty or a hundred years ago. As Society in those days not only tolerated, but even made much of her, we may conclude that the fine lady to many worthy people realised their ideal "grande dame." In these levelling days, she would be promptly relegated to the right-about, as a bore and a fool.

The Professional Talker is another extinct type. In more easy-going times, when knowledge was less diffused than it is now, people were content to sit at the feet of some great man, in order to gain information from the streams of eloquence which flowed from his lips. But now, when everybody prefers to read and think for himself, great talkers find but a scanty audience. No Boswell now, it is to be feared, would lie in wait to take down every word which fell from a Johnson's lips. No party of guests would consider it entertaining to listen for hours to the rhapsodies of a Coleridge.

Everybody, nowadays, wants to talk, and nobody cares to listen. The multiplication of newspapers and magazines has rendered it difficult, if not impossible, for even a brilliant talker to throw much new light upon any subject; and it is much to be feared that the first impulse of the irreverent young men of the present day, if they were assailed by the portentous "Sir!" of Dr. Johnson, would be to mutter "Chuck him out!"

The Haughty Nobleman of the good old times, though he survives in the penny novelette so dear to servant-girls, and in the transpontine drama, is, nevertheless, for all practical purposes, extinct. He was a very awful and unapproachable person, who dwelt for the most part in the seclusion of his ancestral halls, far removed from the gaze of the vulgar, and not to be encountered without awe and trembling. He was treated with an amount of obsequious deference, of which, in these days, it is difficult to form any idea. Now, it is only servants and dependents who are expected to say "my Lord" and "your Ladyship" when addressing members of the aristocracy. But less than fifty years ago highly respectable and cultivated people delighted to interlard their conversation with persons of title with "my Lord" and "your Grace." It would be thought caddish in the extreme for people of the same standing to do so now. Lords and ladies have become so mingled with the common herd of late years, that little remains of the halo of splendour which once surrounded them in the popular imagination. Their domestic affairs, their little weaknesses, their peculiarities, are all minutely chronicled in the society papers for everybody to read. Their once rigidly closed mansions are thrown open twice or thrice a week for the inspection of 'Arry from the counter, and 'Arriet from the kitchen. Their parks are the chosen picnic-grounds of the million. They engage—oh, shades of Sir Leicester Dedlock and the Marquis of Steyne!—in every variety of trade and commerce. They compete with Tom, Dick, and Harry for the honours of the cricket-field, the cattle-show, philanthropy, and literature. They are hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, and as affable to the workman with his dinner tied up in a basin, as to the lord of ten thousand acres. The last-century Duke who rebuked his Duchess, when for the first and last time she ventured to kiss him, with "Madam, my first wife was a Percy, and she would never have presumed to take such a liberty!" has, it may positively be declared, no descendant in these days.

And what has become of the Poor Relation—the typical Poor Relation upon whom Charles Lamb founded such a charming essay? Years ago, the poor relation was an accepted fact in almost every great house. He sat at a remote corner of the table, never spoke unless he

was spoken to, was careful always to express a preference for the plainest fare, and received the impertinences of the servants with proper submission. But, nowadays, who ever sees, or acknowledges, a poor relation? It is a fact that all families possess such appendages; but where they hide them is a mystery. Of course, the Colonies afford a convenient refuge for social failures, and many at this moment are comfortably established there on incomes granted by their friends solely on condition that they never return to their native shores. Further than this, all is guess-work; but we have good grounds for believing that the march of progress has rendered poor relations no longer humble and meek, but accustomed to hold their heads high, and to dress, when they emerge into society, as well as the best. Consequently, when we meet them in the glittering halls of their wealthy connections, we never suspect that they live up five pair of stairs in a shabby back street in Pimlico, and pick up a precarious subsistence by writing sensational stories and painting fans.

The Boarding-school Miss—the sweet and rather soft young creature in white muslin, whom Lord Byron so ungallantly described as "smelling of bread-and-butter"—where, oh, where can we hope to find her, in these days of High Schools and Girton girls? She blushed whenever she was spoken to; she knew nothing on any useful subject under the sun; she fled from before the face of a young man, and in society she never spoke or wished to speak. Literature, art, science were sealed books to her; albeit she painted on velvet, and played the harp. She hid her pretty face in the depths of an enormous bonnet, and she never dreamt of maintaining her opinions in opposition to those of her father and mother. Slang she never used, because she never heard any; but expressed herself on all occasions in polite-letter-writer English. As to hunting, or playing cricket, or learning to swim, or studying Latin and Greek, such fearful visions of impropriety never visited her even in a nightmare. She had no other wish than, in due time, to marry and jog serenely along the highway of life untroubled by lofty aspirations and unfulfilled aims.

The modern schoolgirl, accustomed to devour every novel that comes out, and kept thoroughly posted up in all the events of the day, can hardly realise such a benighted

existence. But it is nevertheless the fact that sixty years ago there were girls who considered it unfeminine to read a newspaper.

Vanished also is the great lady who made a parade of literary tastes at a period when female education was practically nil, and kept a "salon," at which all the noted men of the day were expected to attend to pay abject homage to the hostess. Lady Holland and Lady Blessington would find their glory considerably curtailed, could they revisit the sphere they once adorned.

Nothing more clearly shows the astounding revolution which has taken place in society, than the treatment now accorded to men of genius by the great. Instead of being looked down upon as a mere Grub Street hack, entertained only on sufferance and with the distinct understanding that he should pay for his entertainment by his wit, the modern novelist, artist, or poet only consents to sit at a nobleman's table on terms of perfect equality, and would not tolerate the patronising insolence of a Lady Holland for one moment. He expects that his wife and daughters shall also be included among the guests; having more self-respect than the literary men of former generations, who thought it no shame to leave their families to mope in dull back parlours, while they themselves were being paraded as tame lions for the amusement of some great man's friends. Those who marvel that the "salon" as an institution has never enjoyed more than a temporary success in this country, fail to remember the enormous hold which family ties possess upon the English nation. The "salon" is only possible where the men habitually go to seek amusement apart from their womankind. A hostess in this country may, indeed, desire to gather at her house only the most learned and celebrated men of the day; but, if she invites all the leading poets, writers, artists, and so forth, she must also be prepared to have her house inundated by the—to her—uninteresting crowd of their female relatives: their wives, their sisters, their cousins, and their aunts. So, like a wise woman, she abandons the vain attempt to pose as a leader of thought; though probably not without a sigh for the good old days when literary men went out alone to enjoy themselves, and their wives dutifully stopped at home to make their shirts, like Mrs. Carlyle.

The Heavy Father, with the awful temper and the gouty toe, who played such a

prominent part in the domestic history of days gone by, turning his sons out of doors, heaping curses upon his daughters, pummelling importunate creditors, and generally "raising Cain," as the Americans say, is also gone—or going. It is not that there are not plenty of tyrannical old men with bad tempers now, who would like to be bullies if they could; but the conditions are changed. Young people have very clear and exact ideas of their rights now, and will not submit to be sworn at and disinherited for trifling offences; while the nearest magistrate is the refuge of dependents who may have to complain of personal ill-usage. Papa may rave and stamp, forbid this marriage, or disown that son; but in nine cases out of ten his young people only laugh at him, and the Married Woman's Property Act stares him in the face if he attempts to unjustly seize the possessions of his wife. He finds himself so hemmed in by restrictions in every quarter that, perhaps, more than any other, he has reason to regret the days when an Englishman's house was literally his castle, and he was at liberty to ill-treat those about him as much as he chose, being not only uncensured but actually justified by public opinion.

And if the Heavy Father is threatened with extinction, so also is that peculiar product of his genius, the Model Son—the meek, deferential young man who treated his father with the utmost respect, calling him "sir," and reverencing his words as those of an oracle. The Model Son, when at home, was always at hand to render service to his father, to accompany him in his walks, to assist him in his correspondence, to help him to fight his numerous battles, and to do the agreeable to his friends. Abroad, he dutifully kept his father informed of all his movements, sending home sheets of careful caligraphy, and putting down all expenditure for the inspection of the paternal eye. The Model Son never thought of marrying save when and whom his father pleased, and cheerfully accepted red hair, lameness, and a squint, if by so doing he could add a handsome property to the family estate. Always and everywhere he was the very pattern and mirror of sons; and if he could come back to hear the irreverent youth of the present day address their fathers with, "I say, governor, you're a brick!" I fear he would think we were a race of sadly degenerate beings—that Model Young Man!

CONFESSIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Conceil," etc.*

CHAPTER XXV.

"WHEN THE SEA GIVES UP ITS DEAD."

I SUPPOSE Miss Kate was firmer than I imagined possible, or else enjoyed her woman's prerogative of saying "No," too much to give in, for she remained firm on the subject of that probationary year, and, to my surprise, told me on the day succeeding our conversation, that she was going to return to Templecombe at the end of the week—Friday or Saturday.

It eventually became Saturday; and on the Friday, about dusk, she and Mr. Tresyllion came in from a shopping expedition, laden with toys and parcels for the boys, and told me to bring them some tea in the library.

I thought they both looked a little more grave and sad than was their wont, but put it down to the fact of the coming parting; for Mr. Tresyllion was going to Italy when Miss Kate left town.

I brought in the tea, lingering a little in the pretty, firelit room, with its multitude of flowers, and ferns, and lounges, and knickknacks, and soft, low chairs, and all the feminine surroundings by which Miss Kate had transferred it into what was essentially a "woman's room." Miss Kate had thrown her bonnet and cloak down on a chair. Her pretty hair was all loose and soft about her face. I remember so well seeing Mr. Tresyllion go up to her, and laughingly arrange its picturesque disorder, and then, framing her upturned face in both his hands, bend down and softly kiss the pouting lips.

I closed the door and left them, and was just going down the stairs when a loud peal at the bell startled me.

I went to the front door, expecting to find, as usual, some of the constantly-arriving parcels that marked Miss Kate's expeditions. It was quite dusk, but the light from the gas-lamp showed me a tall figure standing there—a man's figure. I could not see the face. A wide, slouched hat hid it from my sight; but a voice, a familiar voice greeted me by name, and with a sudden shock of fear and horror, I staggered back against the door-post as the visitor lifted his hat and showed me the face of my master—Mr. John Carruthers.

For a moment or two I really didn't know what I said, or did. Everything seemed to be whirling round me, and the buzzing in my ears rendered his words quite unintelligible.

"Is your mistress at Templecombe or here?" he kept repeating; and at last I stammered out that she was here, but that we were to have left on the morrow.

He strode through the hall; but I rushed after him and kept him back a moment or two, while I poured out a flood of incoherent explanations.

"Oh, sir, pray let me prepare my mistress," I implored. "You know we all thought you were—were shipwrecked, and all those months no word—and—and, oh, sir, think of the shock, so sudden, so unexpected, so——"

"You don't say so—joyful," he said, looking sternly at me; and no doubt I did seem rather flurried and flustered. "Don't trouble your head, Jane. Joy never kills; and I can break the news of my own escape from death better than any one else. Where is your mistress?"

"In the library, sir," I said, hopelessly. I could only trust he would not find her in Mr. Tresyllion's arms, or sitting at his feet on a stool by the fire, as she so often did.

He reached the door, and I followed, trembling. But even as his hand was on the handle, he turned round and made a sign to me.

"Go in first," he said. "Say some one—a friend—with news of her husband wishes to see her."

He drew aside, and I knocked and opened the door. Miss Kate was sitting at the little tea-table. Mr. Tresyllion was standing by the fireplace, tea-cup in hand, his back to the leaping flames, his face with its usual look of bright and gay content turned enquiringly to me.

"Why, Jane, what's the matter?" he said. "Have you seen a ghost? You look quite scared!"

I closed the door sharply, wondering whether his voice had reached the watcher outside.

"Oh, Miss Kate," I cried, in a stifled way. "Oh, my dear—my dear. Can you be strong—be brave—just for a little while? You must act, you must. There's no help. For your own sake; for your children's sake. Oh, Miss Kate, don't look like that. How am I to tell you!"

The white, stony face was pitiful and awful in its tragic misery. She guessed—she knew. I suppose my terror told her

that only one thing could have happened. As for Mr. Tresyllion, I heard the crash of a falling cup, and he was beside her, facing me. I thought that, to my dying day, I should never forget the look that leaped into his eyes.

"For Heaven's sake, woman!" he cried, "speak out. What has happened? Not—not news of——"

The word died off his white lips. He could not speak it.

"Yes," I said, breathlessly, "news of Mr. Carruthers. He is not—not dead."

There was not a word—not a sound. Only, as if by one impulse they turned and looked at each other—such a look. His arms dropped; every muscle in the strong young frame seemed to relax. He was like a dead man standing there, and, for a moment, I felt more fear for him than for her.

Then came a low, faint cry. She moved blindly, helplessly to me, like a hurt child.

"Who is it?" she said, in a hoarse whisper. "Who—told you?"

"Oh, my dear!" I cried, and caught her in my arms as she swayed suddenly forward. "I must say it—I must tell you! Oh, Miss Kate! be strong—be brave. After to-day it doesn't matter if—you do break down; but not now—not to-night. He, your husband, is here."

"Here!"

I felt the shudder that ran through the slight young frame. She drew back and looked at me.

"Here? Do you mean to say in this house—near me—now?"

"Yes," I said, "and you must try and seem glad—or—or content. You must! Oh, Miss Kate, remember he knows nothing—nothing; and it is only six months——"

"Six months," she said, "only six months. Do you hear, Rex? I said it was too soon to be glad—that you were too impatient."

Then her voice broke; all the life and light went out of her eyes as the flame of a lamp extinguished. Like a stone she fell to the floor at my feet—just as, with a sudden, impatient wrench, the door was flung open by John Carruthers.

I have but an indistinct memory of what happened then. I think Mr. Tresyllion stood aside, his face white, and set in stern resolve, his eyes resting on the little figure that we had lifted to the

couch—the figure over which another man bent in imploring anguish, blind and deaf to all else, save that Fate had restored her to his arms.

If it was terrible to me—only a looker-on at the tragedy—what must it have been for the two concerned in it?

"Heaven help them! Heaven pity them!" I prayed over and over again, as I bent over my poor, unconscious young mistress, and tried to second her husband's endeavours to restore her senses.

Not that I thought it anything but cruel kindness to do so, knowing full well to what misery she must awaken.

Ah, how sorry I felt for them all! What a wretched, hopeless business it all looked!

And yet, paramount in my mind, and more important than even their happiness, seemed the desirability of concealing the real facts of the case from Mr. Carruthers. He had not as yet seemed to notice Mr. Tresyllion's presence; he was too much concerned about his wife. But after a while she gave signs of returning consciousness, and I glanced in alarm at the quiet figure, with its face set in such stern and hopeless misery.

If he would only have left the room, or moved, or made any sign! But no; he just stood there as if turned to stone, and indifferent to anything that might happen. At last Miss Kate opened her eyes and sat up. She heard her husband's rapturous words; she saw him kneeling there by her side, great tears rolling down his cheeks; his voice speaking out her name in broken, breathless accents. He told her of his marvellous escape, of perils, dangers, and difficulties; and she listened, white and trembling, and with her great eyes, strained and terrified, fixed upon his face.

And then, quite suddenly, Mr. Tresyllion seemed to recover himself, and, as Mr. Carruthers rose to his feet at last, he came forward with extended hand, and in a strange, hoarse voice, spoke out congratulations on his return.

Mr. Carruthers did not seem to think it strange that he should be there, or to notice anything amiss with him. Perhaps he was too excited and upset himself. For my part, I can only say I was thankful when I saw Mr. Tresyllion take up his hat, and, with some incoherent speech about not intruding any longer, leave the room, giving neither look nor hand-clasp to Miss Kate. I followed him out; but when he

got to the hall door, he stood for a moment leaning against it as if strength had failed him.

"Oh, good Heaven!" he panted, suddenly. His hand passed to his heart as if to still its pain. "How can I bear it; how can I lose her—now?"

I summoned up courage then, and approached.

"Sir," I said, "Mr. Tresyllion, oh, don't give way. Think of her. It is ten thousand times worse for her than for you."

"I suppose it is, Jane," he muttered, hoarsely. "Oh, what have we done to deserve this devil's trick of Fate?"

I stood there quite silent, not knowing what to say or do. Presently his hands dropped, and he turned his face to me. So white and haggard was its misery that I could scarcely keep back the tears as I looked at him.

"I can't think—I can't reason yet," he said. "But I must see her again. I can't leave her like this. You must help me, Jane."

The livid, deathly hue of his face, the more than mortal anguish in his eyes, held me dumb and powerless. I had looked on sin, and sorrow, and suffering in my time; but I had never seen, and I pray I never may see again, any human creature look as Mr. Tresyllion looked that night.

"Oh, sir," I entreated, feebly, "don't try and see her any more. Write, if you wish; but don't, for both your sakes, have any more meetings. You are parted; nothing can help or alter that. Why make it harder?"

He looked at me in a bewildered way, as if he had not heard or understood what I had said.

"Poor little Kate," he muttered, hoarsely. "She was quite right. I was in too great haste to be happy. Would to Heaven I might die to-night!"

His hands groped feebly for the latch, and I—my eyes blind with tears—pushed it back and opened the door, and saw him stagger out into the cold, night air.

Then I closed the door and went back into the dim hall and sat down there, trying to think clearly and calmly over all that had taken place.

CHAPTER XXVI. "GOOD-BYE——"

NOT long after Mr. Tresyllion had left, I was summoned again to the library.

"Your mistress is very feverish and

hysterical," explained Mr. Carruthers. "I think you had better get her to bed. I'm afraid the shock was too sudden. It appears that my letter, explaining everything, has not been forwarded from Templecombe."

I saw he suspected nothing, and wondered how long he would remain in that "ignorance" which certainly was "bliss" in his case. Miss Kate followed me out of the room on her husband's arm, walking as a sleep-walker might, and apparently too dazed and stupefied as yet for actual suffering.

But it came soon enough, as I knew it would, and must, and I had to sit there by her side through the long hours of that night, listening to her low, plaintive moans; or watching those miserable, haunting eyes staring blankly at the wall or the firelight, and unconscious now of my presence, or her own peril.

A time so terrible followed, that even now I dread to look back upon it. A time when mad images of fever took the place of all sense and memory; when day followed day, and night succeeded night; and still it seemed there was no change or improvement. And every night, as darkness fell, and the lights were lit in the straw-covered street, a solitary figure would pace to and fro on the opposite pavement—waiting, waiting, with more than mortal patience, till I could slip down and give the news, which, alas! was no news. And sometimes at midnight, or in the quiet morning hours, I could hear that step still echoing on the deserted pavement. And sometimes, too, it seemed to me that she heard it, and recognised it, or felt the strange magnetism of that fateful presence, for she would start up in the bed, her eyes wide and strained, as if seeking to see something invisible; the babbling, feverish words stilled and silenced in the eagerness of listening. Then she would sink back once more on the pillows, going over and over again the same weary, senseless round of words—but never by one of them betraying the secret that was locked in her passionate heart.

Mr. Carruthers was as miserable and anxious as man could be, and about as helpless in a sick-room as men usually are. We had the best doctors, the best nurses—everything that money could procure, or affection suggest. But with it all the dreadful battle had to be waged between youth and strength, and death; and nothing could hasten or shorten the combat.

It was indeed, as I said before, a terrible time. But at last youth and strength got the best of it, and she was pronounced out of danger.

That night—the first time for many a long day—I put on my bonnet and shawl and went out, and met Mr. Tresyllion, and we walked round and round the square beyond, I trying to cheer him as best I could, and persuade him to leave England, and go away for a time, until the first smart and pain of this terrible blow was over.

I might as well have spoken to the iron railings by which we stood.

"I will see her again. I must—if I die for it," he said, doggedly and determinedly. And I sighed as I looked at the changed young face, haggard now, and with terrible lines and shadows blotting out the light and life of its beautiful youth. "How can I leave her like this?" he went on, as I still persisted in my weak entreaties. "A month ago, my promised wife; and now not a word—a look—a hand-clasp to bridge this gulf of division. Do you fancy I could have lived through all these days and nights if it hadn't been just for that hope—the hope I might see her again—look once more into the dear, brown eyes, hear the sweet, remembered voice saying my name? That's all I want, Jane; all I ask. But I would sooner forfeit life than the hope of it. Life!" and he laughed contemptuously. "What is it to me now! All that made it—all that beautified it—all that gave me a thought of purity, or a throb of joy, has had its death-blow!"

"You don't think of her?" I said.

"Don't I?" he cried, passionately. "How little you know! I can tell by my own pain what hers must be. If I went away when she was weak, suffering, desolate, what would she think?"

"Better that she should think ill of you," I said, "than suffer as she will suffer now."

"She need not suffer," he said, abruptly, then stopped, and looked at my startled face with a sudden, shamed confusion. "I—I mean——" he stammered.

"Hush," I said, "I know what you mean; but if you have any regard for her—for the future—for—for her real happiness, you will not tempt her now."

"Heaven forbid," he said, "that I should do—that. But I think, often, that my pain is beyond human endurance."

The misery and hopelessness in his voice brought the tears to my eyes. To think of that beautiful dream laid waste—to think that the old, weary struggle must begin all over again!

"If I could kill my memory—or myself," he muttered, desperately. "Now go, Jane—go back to your post; but remember, not all the power of men or devils shall keep me from her side when she is well enough to see me. On that I am determined. It may be the last time on earth. I could almost pray that it might. I suppose it will come to putting the seas between us sooner or later! Doesn't it seem a strange thing that the whole of one's life can be wrecked just for the love of one woman—such a little woman, too!" and he laughed bitterly—recklessly.

How strange it sounded in the quiet street! Yet I thought no sob had ever held such pathos, or spoken such despair. Then he drew his hat sharply over his eyes, and left me without another word.

I went back to the house and to my duties there; but my heart was heavy with dread, and not even the new consciousness in my dear's pretty eyes, nor the weak, loving smile she gave me, were of any effect to raise my spirits. I could only think of the misery and the trouble that threatened her, and wonder, in a bewildered, hopeless fashion, what the end of it all would be.

Miss Kate, happily for her, was as yet too feeble to think or feel. She just seemed content to lie still, and be ministered to and waited on, asking nothing, saying nothing. But a week glided by, and she was able to lie on the couch in her dressing-room; and a faint, fitful colour began to replace the waxen paleness in her cheeks. I noted that her eyes were often absorbed and thoughtful, and they had a way of following me about and questioning me that was excessively embarrassing.

At last the evil day came. We were alone, and she was better and stronger than she had yet seemed; strong enough to talk—so the doctor said—and she seemed impatient to put that newly-received permission to the test. I could not evade her any longer. She dismissed the nurse, and bade her take a long spell of rest; and then whispered me to lock the door and come and sit close beside her.

"Tell me all—everything," she said beseechingly. "Where is he? Does

know I have been ill? Hasn't he written to me?"

I couldn't resist the pleading in her eyes. I told her how he had been like a sentinel at his post for all these weary weeks; how I had been obliged, even against my better judgement, to slip out from time to time and give him news of her. She listened quite quietly—far too quietly, I thought, for her. It was as if she, too, were framing some desperate resolve, but she gave me no clue to her thoughts that night, nor for many days that followed, each of which brought improved health and strength, though she seemed less than thankful for such gifts. Mr. Carruthers left for Templecombe as soon as she was really on a fair way to recovery, and it was arranged that she should go there also, as soon as the doctor thought her strong enough to bear the journey.

The nurses had left. She was able now to come downstairs to the library, if she wished; but for long she shrank from going into that room, and I know only too well the reason.

At last, one evening she told me she was coming down. On the morrow Mr. Carruthers was expected, and, in all probability, we should leave town at the end of the week.

I go back now to my diary for the events of this night—a night destined to live in my memory as long as my life lasts.

It was about eight o'clock, as near as I can remember, when Miss Kate left her dressing-room. She looked very white and fragile, I thought, as I followed her down the staircase; and her loose gown of white cashmere, lined and bordered with white fur, seemed to increase the delicacy and youth of her appearance.

A bright fire burned in the grate. The couch was drawn up near it, and she nestled down amidst the soft bearskin rugs with a sigh of fatigue. I noticed that she was trembling greatly.

I lit the lamps and drew down the blinds.

"Would you like me to stay with you, Miss Kate?" I asked her.

She looked up quickly.

"Yes, Jane," she said. "It is rather lonely."

Her eyes wandered from place to place. How full of memories that room must have been to her! What an embodiment of "the eloquence of silent things!"

I drew a chair up beside the couch and

watched her in silence, and not without fear.

Presently she raised herself on one arm, and, looking straight at me, said quickly: "Jane, I have been all this time making a resolution. It was very hard to do—but I have done it at last. I am going to tell John everything."

I looked at her in amazement. "Oh, Miss Kate," I cried, "is that wise? You will spoil all his peace of mind for ever."

"Better that," she cried, passionately, "than deceit and hypocrisy. I will tell him the whole pitiful, miserable story. After all, he is my husband; he is bound to help me; to protect me from—myself. For it has come to that. I don't trust myself, Jane. I am too weak where Rex is concerned. I only know I love him—and I could just as easily tear the heart from my breast as change my feelings. Oh," and she sobbed helplessly, weakly, as one in mortal terror. "Oh, Jane, Jane, if only I had died—if only I had died! Why has Heaven raised me up again to go through all this awful suffering? I thought it was over. Surely once in a lifetime is sufficient."

"My dear," I said, pityingly, "we can't tell the why and wherefore of our sufferings here. How often and often I have puzzled about it!"

"Puzzled!" she cried, bitterly, "I have thought and thought till sometimes I fancied I should go mad. It seems as if we spend our youth in desiring experience, and all our after years in regretting it. And one is so—alone—after all. No friendship, no love really reaches deep enough to help us. I was so content with life once; but now it is all fever, unrest, torture. And yet it does not seem as if I had wilfully done wrong. What tears I have shed, Jane! Sometimes it has seemed as if my heart's blood was being wrung out from my burning eyes; and it was all for nothing—all for nothing."

"Oh no, Miss Kate," I answered. "Heaven sends sorrow for our good. It is all part of life's lesson, and we must learn it soon or late."

"I used to think," she said, wearily, "that only physical sensations were real enough to hurt one. How little I knew! Oh, Jane, Jane, I would rather have the worst bodily pain than this awful struggling with my heart and its weakness. It is a fight where I am always worsted; and my strength goes, and goes, and goes. I—I—"

it is no use trying now to puzzle out why we met, or why we loved; nothing can alter the fact that we have done both. And because we ought not to have loved—because from the first it seemed wrong, and—and impossible—it only struck its roots deeper, it only spread its arms wider, wider, till the embrace enclosed all life that was worth calling life."

I turned aside to hide the tears that had gathered in my eyes. There was a long silence in the quiet room. Then she lifted her face and wrung her hands together as if in a sudden paroxysm of pain.

"You know, Jane," she went on, suddenly, "I have been quite quiet, quite patient all this time; but I have thought everything out, and have come to this conclusion: I cannot fight my battle any longer. I haven't the strength. I will tell John so, and he must help me. Surely he cannot blame me so very much. I was so young. I—I had not taken life in any way seriously when I married; and no one could have tried harder than I tried to conquer the feeling I had for Rex Tresyllion. But it was all no use—no use. And now I have made up my mind. To-morrow John will be here; to-morrow I will tell him everything. He can decide what he pleases. Perhaps he will think me wicked, ungrateful, false, shallow. I cannot help it. I would sooner be thought the wickedest woman in the world than know myself to be a hypocrite in his house."

"You will lose both men," I said. "The man you love, who can be nothing to you now; and the man who loves you, and whom you are going to put to a test from which even an angel might shrink. Oh, surely, surely you will not do it!"

"I mean to do it," she repeated, resolutely, her pale lips set in something of the stern and cruel lines I had seen so often in Sir Rupert's face. "I can go to papa," she went on presently, "and live abroad with him; and, perhaps, John will let me see the boys—sometimes. They love me, and won't think harshly of me, I know."

I was silent. I could not think of anything to say, being, indeed, too startled and too alarmed at the desperate resolution she had formed.

She had been so quiet all this time—and to think that in her heart she had been planning anything so mad, and useless, and almost cruel!

She sank back again on the pillows and closed her eyes, as if for very weariness. For a few moments the stillness was un-

broken, save for the ticking of the clock, or the fall of the ashes in the grate.

Suddenly she sprang up; her eyes dilated; two bright spots of vivid crimson burning in either cheek; her small hands, so white and wasted now, clasped tight to her heart. "Oh, Jane," she cried, "listen; that is his step outside—there—on the pavement!"

"Nonsense, Miss Kate," I said, impatiently. "There are so many people passing to and fro. How can you tell one step from another?"

"I feel it," she said, quietly. "I know he is there just as surely as I know I live, Jane. I should know it, I believe, if I were lying in my grave, and he bent over the poor dust that once meant—me. Oh, my love—my love!"

I could hear the step; slow, measured, steadily passing to and fro beneath the lighted window. I looked at her as she sat there, her breath coming and going unevenly, the colour paling in her cheeks; her hands still clasped against her throbbing breast.

"I will see him," she said, suddenly. "Go and tell him so, Jane. It will be for the last time, but I must say good-bye—better that pain than the blank, desolate silence of such weeks as these."

I rose from my seat.

"Remember, Miss Kate," I said, warningly, "you are still very weak, and unfit for any agitation. You are doing a very unwise thing, in my opinion."

"Do you think," she said, smiling bitterly, "that life is so dear and precious that I am afraid to risk it? But you may stay here if you like. Perhaps it would be as well. You can tell John, to-morrow, that, as his wife, I remembered what was due to him."

I went out then and opened the front door. Her instinct had not deceived her. Mr. Tresyllion was there. He came up when he saw me, and looked enquiringly into my face.

"Will you come in, sir?" I said, abruptly. "Mrs. Carruthers wishes to see you."

The blood flushed warm and bright to the haggard young face. He looked almost incredulous. "Is it true; do you mean it?" he exclaimed, brokenly.

"Yes, sir. That is my message. Mrs. Carruthers is downstairs for the first time. To-morrow she leaves for Templecombe."

He came in at once; but, as I closed the door, I saw him stagger, and lean against the balustrade of the stairs. I thought how

terribly ill he looked; but I made no remark, only led the way to the library door, and held it open for him to pass through.

"She—she is alone?" he said, in a hoarse, strange whisper. And, knowing the dread in his mind, I hastened to reassure him, adding that Mr. Carruthers was at Templecombe.

Miss Kate was half-lying, half-sitting on the couch; her face white as her gown, and her eyes looking larger and darker than ever in contrast to that waxen pallor.

He seemed to make but one stride, and then was bending over her—her hands clasped tight in his, his eyes devouring every line and feature of the sweet, changed face.

"Oh, Kate!" he cried, and then was silent, save for the laboured breath that seemed to tear at his heart.

She looked up into his eyes, and then—in a passion of sobs and tears, she buried her face in the hands she had wrenched from his grasp. She had overrated her strength, or the shock and surprise of that change in him had been too much for her self-control.

He turned abruptly to me.

"Give her something, for Heaven's sake!" he cried. "I—I can't bear to see her cry."

He moved away to the fireplace, and I saw him lean his head on his folded arms, and stand there in resolute endeavour to retain the self-control so sorely tried.

I gave Miss Kate some sal-volatile, and did my best to urge her to compose herself. For a brief space there was silence; then he turned again, and, seeing she was leaning quietly back on her pillows, he drew near, and seated himself by her side.

I drew back into the darkest corner of the room. Neither of them seemed to notice if I were there or not.

"You are so weak—still," he said. "Perhaps I ought not to have come in. But how could I help it? I have only lived for this moment ever since I knew you were out of danger. Oh, my poor darling—"

"Hush!" she said, sharply. "Don't call me that. I can't be yours again—ever—ever again. I sent for you to tell you—that. I prayed so hard to die, and yet I have had to live— Oh, Rex, don't look like that—you kill me!"

Their eyes met in one long glance, fraught with sharp pain, and tearless misery. So might Eve and Adam have looked their last at Paradise; so might

lost souls look back on the glorious "might-have-beens" of a wasted life.

"Kate," he said, at last, "have you made up your mind—have you thought of what is to become of us now?"

"Yes," she said; "it is only too clear—too plain—you—you must know that yourself, Rex. Our dream is over—nothing remains but to part—to forget, or, if that is not possible, to bear the pain till death or absence kills it out of our hearts."

"I think," he said, in a harsh, strange voice, "that your decision is in itself a death-blow to one of us. How can I forget—how can I live, without you? You have become all and everything to me. You have uprooted every previous object, aim, content, that made up life. As well ask me to cease to breathe, as to forget. I simply cannot do it, so there is no use in making false promises. I know, as well as you do, that I have no claim upon you now, but that doesn't make me love you one whit the less; nor could it, if fifty John Carrutherses stood in my path."

"Don't you think," she said, with a little mirthless smile, "one—is enough! He can part us as effectually as fifty!"

"Oh, Kate," he cried, "don't jest, don't trifle. Remember this is life or death to me. Heaven knows I did not want to love you. I tried my best to put you out of my thoughts, my heart, my life. But it was no use. Did ever Fate play so cruel a trick before?"

"There is no use in railing at Fate now," she said, wearily. "We have to make up our minds to go through an ordeal such as we never dreamt of facing. There is no escape—none."

Once more he looked at her; I saw the warm, bright colour flush her cheeks, and her eyes sink in sudden, shamed confusion.

"No, Rex," she said; "no—no—no! I have thought of that. I knew you would think of it; but I cannot do it. I should never be happy—never for one single moment; though Heaven knows I love you more than any human creature on the face of this earth. But you could not stifle remorse; you would not give me content or peace. I should try you in a thousand ways, and you would grow weary and unhappy too. It would need more than mortal patience to bear with me, and the deepest of deep human love to satisfy me."

"And I would give you both," he cried, with sudden, mastering passion. "Yes, and more than both. Every throb of heart and soul, every dream, every desire! You

might drain my life of all it holds, and I would be content to give it you. You might exact every sentiment that love can give, or passion satisfy, tax patience to its utmost, constancy to the depth and height of its every meaning, and still I would be content to worship you, and ask no reward save—your love. Your love, that was—that is mine, Kate; deny it if you can!”

He was kneeling beside her, clasping her hands in both his own; his face ablaze with passionate emotion; his eyes gazing through tears at her paling face.

“I can’t—deny—it,” she said; and her voice grew strangely low and solemn. “To my own eternal misery—I love you.”

“Oh, hush,” he cried, despairingly. “Don’t speak like that. Reproach from you is more than I can bear.”

He rose and stood beside her, one hand resting on the scroll of the couch where she lay.

“You will go back,” he said, “to your old life, to your husband’s arms, to your children’s love; but I——”

There were no words to fill that broken pause. It was eloquent enough of the desolation that the future must hold.

“Never to see you; never to touch your hand, your lips. Oh, I can’t bear it; I can’t face it. I, who looked upon you as my wife, my very own. Oh, love, it is killing me.”

A sob burst from him; the terrible, choking sob wrung from a man’s anguish.

She rose and stood before him, pale and trembling.

“Don’t,” she said, in a low, stifled voice. “If—if you break down, how am I to find strength? Do you think you suffer less than I do? No, Rex; indeed—indeed you don’t; and I am not going back to the life you fancy. I—I could not; so I have made up my mind to tell John everything—everything; and then——”

“Then,” he said, “there will be one more burdened heart and broken life. What good can that do, Kate? You won’t come to me; and yet you—in a way—divorce yourself from him.”

“I know,” she said, desperately. “It seems foolish, no doubt, but I must do it. I feel I could not bear the strain of that double life. With all my faults, Rex, I never was a hypocrite.”

“No,” he said, “I don’t think you were. You always spoke out pretty plainly; even when it hurt——”

I was looking straight at him while he said these words; and suddenly I saw his face turn a ghastly, awful hue.

He staggered and almost fell on to the couch, while, with a little cry of terror, Miss Kate threw herself on her knees beside him.

“Rex, dearest! Oh, Heaven! what is it?” she cried, wildly. “Jane—Jane—come here!”

No need to call me. I was at his side as soon as herself. I saw him raise his hand to his throat in a bewildered, feeble way, and I tried to unfasten the close-fitting collar. But even as I did so the colour of his face changed, and a shudder ran through the strong young frame.

Then, with a cry of more than mortal agony—a cry the like of which I pray Heaven I may never hear again—he fell back on the pillows.

CHAPTER XXVII FINIS.

EVEN as I tore open the linen shirt regardless of studs and button, even as I calmly bade Miss Kate fetch the restoratives that I had used so often for herself, I knew it was all no use.

Rex Tresyllion was dead.

Dead in the promise of his youth, in the flush of fame and success, and though there are no such things as broken hearts according to science, I think his was broken that night—broken beneath the strain of misery, the effort at self-restraint, the long, long penance, the bitterness of endured suffering from which there seemed no escape.

Even now—and all this happened many years ago—I can hardly bring myself to write calmly of that awful night; to speak of Miss Kate’s grief.

No; that is too sacred a thing for strangers to intermeddle with. I can’t think of it even now with dry eyes.

We sent for a doctor; but he could do nothing. I think he called it “aneurism of the heart,” or some such grand name; but what did the name signify? The fact remained the same. Rex Tresyllion was no more. Life had done its best and its worst for him.

Fortunately, there was no inquest or fuss, because I discovered the doctor who had been attending him, and he gave a certificate as to cause of death.

What passed between Miss Kate and her husband I cannot say. I saw him as he left her room, after hearing the whole pitiful story. I could not, if I tried, describe his face, or the look that, for years after, spoke out his suffering and endurance in the patient eyes.

I don't think he ever blamed her. Indeed, he could not have had the heart to do it, seeing so plainly her suffering—knowing how she had tried to do battle against the feeling that had been destined to wreck two lives, and spoil one.

They both went to Templecombe before the funeral. But I, being left behind, attended it, unknown, and unobserved. As I lingered for one last look at the spot of earth which held all that remained now of that bright, and handsome, and gifted personality I had known as Rex Tresyllion, I saw a dark, veiled figure approach from behind a group of trees.

Some instinct told me who it was. I moved a short distance away, and I saw her stand there beside that open space, till suddenly a paroxysm of grief robbed her of self-command, and she sank down on the damp, cold clay with one long, passionate cry, that only the silence of the grave might hear and answer now.

I stole away, softly and unobserved, wondering a little how it was that memory should suddenly show me, like a lightning flash, that little room in Bruton Street, and the dismay and disorder of glass and china, and the careless grace of a young figure perched upon the table, and looking with laughing eyes at the vexed and handsome face of a woman as he said: "Cross—Pauline?"

Poor Mrs. Cray! I never saw her again, but I know she lives, because of her books; though they changed, like herself, and became gloomy, serious, and metaphysical; so that I gave up reading them long ago—for I really didn't understand them.

Only a few words more about Miss Kate, and then I can consider my "Confessions," such as they are, are over and done with.

Unlike most confessions, they seem to concern other people a great deal more than myself; but, then, the other people have made up the events of my life, and have shaped, and ordered, and affected it so strongly, that I could not write of it without writing of them.

Miss Kate was never the same after that terrible night. She seemed like one turned to stone. She never cried, or complained; she never spoke of her poor young lover. She only moved and looked as if the very springs of her life were maimed and broken, and so I am sure they were.

Mr. Carruthers was just as good to her as ever he had been; very patient—very gentle. I don't think he ever said one word of blame, though I could see what a change the knowledge of that story made in his life, and how it aged him by years; for all that, he never reproached, or complained, or was anything outwardly but the kind and genial gentleman the world had always known. But the deepest wounds bleed inwardly; and, sometimes, when I saw his eyes rest on his wife's changed face, or heard the broken tenderness of some low spoken words, I knew that he suffered keenly as herself, and like herself, without hope or help.

She tried her best, my poor dear, to take up the burden of duty once more; to play her part in her own home; but month by month and year by year it grew harder, and she drooped and faded, and her strength left her, and everything seemed an effort at last; and so a day came when there was no disguising the truth any longer; when she took to her bed, only saying to me:

"Oh, Jane, I am so tired—so tired."

And that was all. And she never complained, nor seemed ever to suffer any pain, but was just—tired; until one day—three years after her ill-fated lover had died—she just fell quietly back in my arms and, with a smile, the first I had seen on her lips since that awful night, looked up in my face and said:

"Good-bye, my faithful old Jane," and went to meet him.

I don't suppose any one who reads this will care to hear any more about me or my affairs, or I might tell them how Tom came home, ill and repentant, and found me out; and how, woman-like, I forgave him, and lived with him for one troubled, toilsome year, when he, too, went "the way of all flesh," and I was again left alone to battle with life and the world.

But I have never wanted for kind friends, or a helping hand, though I am an old woman now, and find my chief pleasure in looking back at the events of my life, and the stories I have learnt, and the people I have known.

But among them all there is not any story so dear to me, in spite of its sadness, or any memory that I love with such faithful love, as the story and the memory of "Miss Kate."

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER II. THE BIRTH OF THE NEW.

THE mental tonic has been of excellent benefit, which shows how good a thing it is, upon occasion, to break a rule. My rule has been kept so long, and so strictly, that it costs somewhat in the breaking. Hard work and I have dwelt together year by year in close and loving companionship.

Thank Heaven for hard work, and plenty of it! Where should I have been without it? What bitter memories would have gathered about me, fungus-like, poisoning the very springs of life, if it had not been for hard work! How would my energies have been paralysed; how would my morbid and vengeful impulses have drifted me at their baneful will whither they would, if it had not been for the work which thrust itself daily and hourly before me, crying out to be done, and well done! Thank Heaven that I listened to that imperative demand, and cast out the demons that for one bad, bitter, hopeless spell possessed me.

And now, John Mogeridge, my friend, I owe thee much!

For I have done well to break my rule of solitude to-day. I am refreshed—strengthened. Yesterday I was conscious of possible flagging; to-night, I am ready for anything—"my own man" again, as the saying goes. Like a person who abstains from wine for years, and then takes a single glass, I am exceptionally stirred by what to another would seem as nothing.

I have been, or seem to have been, in a world new, strange, beautiful. In this

world I have called out sympathy for Bessy and little Bob—a sympathy better and more helpful than mine, because it is all womanly. In this world I have met reality and truth—I have touched hands with them; I have listened to their clear voices, and met their sweet and candid glances.

Yet this new world of mine would seem but a commonplace paradise when described.

It was in an unpretending street, a street, just now, bare enough, since its window-boxes are empty and its virginian-creepers leafless.

The welcome quiet of a fire in the dim, grey afternoon light, the touch of a hand smooth and soft as that of a girl, welcomed me to the particular house in this street which had been indicated by my sister's letter. In such a manner did I greet, and in such surroundings did I find, the Miss Birt, who had been "so good to dearest Janey when she had her accident at Weston-super-Mare." It seemed to me as though that modest parlour held a sort of summer all its own, the sweeter and the brighter for the chill and gloom outside; while, by way of presiding genius, Miss Birt, a veritable fairy godmother, stood enshrined.

She was a little old lady, a good way on what is called the "wrong side of sixty;" but with her could be no wrong side of anything, since all was perfect of its kind. Her features were small and fine; her face lined; but the cheeks softly pink like the inside of a sea-shell, and the eyes had never grown old. On either side of this dear old face were curls of snow-white hair, and a setting of delicate lace finished off the whole.

But all this is like describing the colour

and aspect of a blossom, while the subtle sweetness of its perfume escapes you.

There was a gentle but persistent earnestness about Miss Birt that caught and held you. Very quickly you realised that meeting with her was no casual greeting that would pass out of memory and leave no mark, no sign upon your life. It was not a thing to come across and be carelessly cast aside. Rather were you conscious of regret that so steadfast and helpful a spirit had been in the world so long and you had known it not.

We sat on either side of the fire, which shone the brighter for the increasing gloom outside. As the flame glittered it caught the black, round eye of a stuffed parrot in a case, set far back in a recess, so that the creature seemed to blink craftily at me.

With quiet insistence I was detained. I had meant to pay an ordinary call; but time sped; the gloom deepened without, while light and happiness seemed to radiate the brighter within.

Ere long came the cheerful clatter of tea-cups, and candles were lighted in two old-fashioned sconces that stood one on either side the mantel-shelf. I had stepped out of the old life in the sombre rooms surrounded by blank prison walls, into something new and strange. Perhaps also, in her graceful hospitality to me, was something new and strange to Miss Birt. I do not think visitors are common at Prospect Place. I think a new acquaintance is a rare thing. At all events I caught more than one enquiring glance from the ancient servitor who brought in tea, and had to be sent out a second time for an extra cup. This servant was a hard-featured woman, as old as, or older than her mistress. Her mouth was a line; her eyes deep-set and keen, peering at me, not without suspicion, as I thought, from under white and shaggy brows.

"Kezia," said Miss Birt, "this gentleman is little Miss Janey's uncle."

"Is he, now?" said Kezia, with an air as of one who would say: "It pleases the gentleman to say so, but—who knows how things may be?"

A faint flush rose to the cheeks of Kezia's mistress, as she took her place at the tea-table and tried to look sternly at her retainer. But the effort was lost on Kezia, who set forth an array of toast and delicate slices of bread-and-butter without once raising her eyes from her work.

"We seem to be treating you very un-

ceremoniously, Mr. Draycott," said my hostess; then, with a pretty hesitation and shyness she added: "But your sister has told me so much about you, that I seem to know and—like you—almost as if you were an old friend.

"I seem to know so much about your work among those poor people in the prison," continued Miss Birt, a dewy brightness as of rising tears shining in her eyes.

Here, I felt, was my opening to bring in Bessy and little Bob; and Miss Birt let her tea grow cold as she listened, absorbed, to the story of John Mogeridge and of those he had left behind.

From a little restless movement of the head, a motion of the hands, I could tell that she would have liked to be up and doing without delay; to have put on her bonnet there and then and set off to speak kind words of comfort to Bessy and pet little Bobby. If anything can soften to tears the hard, strained brightness of the poor widow's eyes, surely it must be the ministrations of this gentle soul, I was thinking, when there came the click of a latch-key in the passage door, a footfall along the oilcloth, and then the entry of a whiff of cold air and briny fog together with that of a square-set, broad-shouldered young fellow, with a face quaintly, yet not unattractively, like that of a terrier dog.

Miss Birt was on her feet in a moment, helping him off with his great-coat, setting his neck-tie straight, looking, too, very much as if she would have liked to run her busy fingers through the short, tawny curls that clustered on his head.

"This is my dear nephew, Dumplie—I should say, Mr. McGregor. Dumplie, this is Mr. Draycott, little Janey's uncle, don't you know, dear?"

"Well, I didn't know till you told me, Aunt Dacie; but I am glad to know, and glad to see Mr. Draycott," said a mellow, cheery voice that it did one good to hear; and a hearty grasp met mine—a grasp that seemed to tell you a great deal about the man who gave it.

Nothing could be more charming than to hear Miss Birt interesting this nephew of hers in Bessy and Bobby. And while she spoke—I chiming in with a word now and again, the young man listened, even at times eagerly, yet with an absent air at times, touching meanwhile the breast-pocket of his coat as though reminding himself of some treasure that lay there in ambush.

With an alacrity she had by no means shown when attending upon me, the hard-featured servant brought in various fresh viands, catching, as I could see, fragments of Miss Birt's discourse, and giving an eye at me as who should say:

"I hope this is not a pack of lies you've been telling my mistress, Mr. Who-ever-you-are; for she's too good a lady to be played tricks with, I can tell you."

Conscious rectitude supported me under these unfriendly glances, and I felt an inward conviction that the day would come when Kexia—for by that old-world name I heard Miss Birt address her—would do me truer justice.

I noted alight signs of ill-concealed trouble in "Dumphie," as Miss Birt's narrative of John Mogeridge, Besay, and little Bobby, came to an end; and then, of a sudden resolve.

"I have heard from Glennie to-day, Aunt Dacie," he said, pulling forth a foreign-looking letter from the pocket I before spoke of. "They have had a brush out there in Zululand."

Miss Birt pushed her chair back from the table, set down her tea-cup, and caught her breath quickly.

"A brush?" she said, faintly. "Dumphie—Dumphie—do you mean a battle?"

"Yes, dear," returned the other, tenderly putting his strong young arm round her shoulders, and apparently forgetting my existence entirely, and speaking to her as if their respective ages were reversed, and he by far the elder of the two. "A sharp one, too; but Glennie is all right. And listen to what he says—what fine news he sends us: 'Tell Aunt Dacie it is all over, and I'm 'quite perzackly.' Tell her, too, that I hear I'm to be mentioned in the General's despatches. That will cheer her up, and help her to be less frightened.'"

It helped her to something else as well, for she suddenly put her hands before her face and broke into tears.

"Oh, Dumphie," she sobbed, "my dear, dear boy—if only my brother had been alive, what a proud man he would be this day!"

For the moment I was puzzled by the difference of names amongst these good people; but before long I learnt that they were connected only by what are called "ties of marriage;" ties, in their case, ten times more strong and tender than other people's ties of blood—that Dumphie and Glennie

were Aunt Dacie's nephews, only because they had been her brother's step-sons.

Half laughing, half crying, Miss Birt began to explain these things to me, Dumphie chiming in, glad, I could see, that the old lady's thoughts should be diverted from that "brush" out in Zululand.

"When Glennie says he is 'quite perzackly,' he is quoting an old family joke, you know, Mr. Draycott. He was so small, when he used to say that, that it was as much as he could do, the dear child, to get up the door-steps by himself; but he would never have any one to help—never; so you see he was always a determined character was Glennie, and a destined soldier from the beginning. I expect he makes short work with those creatures out there." But here the tender heart of the speaker smote her on behalf of the "creatures," and she added: "Not but what I dare say they have their good points, poor, misguided things."

It appeared, by-and-by, that Dumphie and Glennie did not stand alone in the affection of Aunt Dacie, for I heard of two youngsters who were spoken of as "our sailors," and was introduced to a picture of two bonnie lads, as like as two peas—which was natural enough, since they were twins—shoulder to shoulder, dressed as became young middies, with smart, gold-laced caps and jackets, and two round, solemn, big-eyed faces, each with a look of Dumphie, yet with a difference.

"Stephen and John are away with their ship now, out in the Indian Sea. They like being there because their father loved the East, and used to talk to them about it when they were ever such little fellows, no higher than the table. He served there many, many years; and, when their mother died, he went back to his old haunts and died there of a broken heart. There had never been anything so good in his life before as Lucille, and, when the good was gone, he could not bear the burden of his life without it, and just laid it down. We are people who have had a great deal of trouble, Mr. Draycott; but the troubles have been cords, I think, to draw the rest of us closer and closer together."

At this Aunt Dacie covered her eyes with her hand a moment, as one who returns thanks to Heaven for mercies given; and I felt as if the little room were a church, so solemn and so sweet was the atmosphere all about me.

So had I known trouble—bitter, biting

trouble, but it had not made me feel like that.

I had had to bear it all alone; not blamelessly, either, as this simple soul had borne her cross; and it had made me wicked, and defiant, unruly, rebellious, bitter. Its voice—even in memory, seemed a harsh and grating cry beside the soft, low wall of hers.

It was quaint enough to hear her talk of the small house, with its garden, and simple dwelling-rooms, as some chatelaine might speak of an ancestral domain. She told me of an ancient poplar-tree in the garden that was the pride of the place; shorn of its glory now, it is true, and bare and brown enough, but "a sight to see" when spring should stir the sap in its old veins, and green and gold tracery make it once again "a thing of beauty." I could see that I was expected to adopt the poplar, and did so on the spot. I entered into the spirit of pride in its possession, so that one might have thought its shade had sheltered me from childhood's earliest hour. Real earnestness is a thing few can withstand; certainly not I, for one. I began to be conscious of a bewildering feeling that I had passed through this phase of life before. I was even ready to fancy that I could anticipate what Miss Birt was going to say.

"We have made great improvements in the place, of late years," said Aunt Dacie, speaking with a certain dignity as became the subject; and looking round the cosy parlour complacently; "there used to be a great chandelier right in the middle of this room—an eyesore I assure you, Mr. Draycott. At least, as the young people grew up they thought it so, and now I really think these ancient sconces, which Dumphie here picked up for a mere song in a second-hand shop in the City, give us quite a mediæval appearance, don't they?"

I learnt many things before I left: that the parrot's name, in life, had been Poly-anthus; that the bird had belonged to a lady whom Miss Birt spoke of as Sister Charlotte—shading her face a moment with a slender hand as she named her, just as you may see a child cover its eyes to say grace—a gesture that led me to the conclusion that Sister Charlotte, as well as that dear brother of whom Miss Birt had spoken, was dead; and that Aunt Dacie was the sole remaining representative of the older generation.

Other things I gathered—such as that a great trouble had come and gone—been

lived through, or lived down, and had bound Aunt Dacie and her nephew, Dumphie, very closely together—closer, indeed, than many who are mother and son. I seemed to know intuitively that this trouble had been kept from touching the younger members of the family, as much as possible; and that the present position in life of the two young sailors and of Glennie was owing to the devotions and exertions of Dumphie.

I gathered that, while being a son to Aunt Dacie, some one had been like a young sort of father to the youngsters, and that this some one was Dumphie.

I gathered that—toiling hard in City life himself, the bread-winner, the helper, the counsellor, the hope and stay of the rest—a man had garnered up all his pride in the social position of his younger brothers, himself content to take his stand upon the lower, but more lucrative commercial level from whence he could stretch out a generous hand to help them upwards and onwards, and that that self-forgetful man was Dumphie.

I gathered that all this had been done in such simplicity of mind, that no one would be more surprised to find it looked upon as anything out of the way than Dumphie himself... which harvest of observation shows how late I must have stayed at Prospect Place.

A strange and pleasant memory rises before my mind. It grows nearer and nearer, and clearer and clearer, as I dwell upon it.

I see a window up three wide, low steps, forming an alcove—a snug retreat, indeed, to read, or think, or "lazy" in—its casements looking out upon the fair academic city, with its glimpses of greenery and its stately colleges—in a word, the window of my old room at Merton. This alcove is big enough to hold a small round table, as well as seats; and there, upon that table, held firmly down by the elbow which I have placed upon it, lies a hasty, bold, and really clever sketch—no, caricature—of myself. Each point in my personal appearance has been caught, exaggerated, and made the most of.

There I am, tall, lantern-jawed, and gaunt; while underneath this precious work of art is neatly inscribed:

"Old Draycott—ten years hence."

Opposite to me is a curly-pated, handsome lad, whose comely face, just at the present moment, is all one glowing blush. His blue eyes are full of shame; yet, as

they meet mine, I catch a gleam of fire lurking in their depths.

The blushing boy is young Hazledean of Corpus.

I am coaching young Hazledean of Corpus for his "mods."

"So that is what you think I shall be like ten years hence, is it?"

As I speak thus indifferently, and with a casual kind of air, I am still conscious of a certain mortification deep down in me somewhere.

I am full of high hopes. No shadow of what lies before me has as yet fallen across my life. I look upon myself as an ambitious sort of fellow, quite above such petty weaknesses as personal vanity. Nevertheless, that petty weakness is in me, and now it suffers; for I am conscious that young Hazledean of Corpus is decidedly clever with his pen, and has made a decidedly clever caricature of his coach.

And now, hurrying along on my way home to-night, agitated with ideas, thoughts, desires, longings, that were all new and strange to me, I passed a gin-palace—a foul, flaring thing at the corner of the street. There, in a mirror so placed as to double the glitter and glare of the lights, I saw, advancing to meet me, the gaunt, lantern-jawed individual drawn by a thoughtless boy in the far-off long ago—"Old Draycott, ten years hence." Yet, I am not old, and it is not ten years ago since I so oftentimes looked out from my window upon Merton Street.

We cannot count our lives by time. A man or woman may be well on in middle age, and yet be young in heart and feeling; and a crushing grief may make one old in a night.

Into two years—nay less—of my life has been pressed the anguish, the shame, the misery of twenty. Those two years did the work of twenty; and that is why I have grown to look like the "Old Draycott" evolved out of the inner consciousness of Hazledean of Corpus. Why have I not thought of this before? How is it that these changes have stolen upon me unnoted and unmarked? My personality has been as a vesture, folded up and laid aside, which the moths have eaten without the owner's knowledge. Now, when I come to shake it out, and hold it out to the light, I see what the work of time had been!

By the way, I see I have forgotten here

to record the fact that there is a second Miss Birt, a young one—eighteen, or thereabouts.

She has a sweet, strange presence that, once seen, haunts the memory; her eyes are the eyes of a mystic in the face of a child. She is half-sister to Dumphie, and she calls him "brother," short and simple, as if there were no other brother in the world.

THE NICKNAMES OF THE "OLD MASTERS."

THE authorities of our National Gallery have recently introduced an innovation, which they may be supposed to regard as an improvement, in the shape of the abolition from many of the picture frames in the Trafalgar Square saloons, of those nicknames by which so many of the old Masters are habitually known.

At first sight, this change may appear defensible. It may be thought derogatory to the dignity of the great art of painting that its most illustrious exponents should figure in official catalogues and inscriptions, not under their own proper appellations, but under by-names capriciously bestowed, and sometimes conveying the suggestion of personality and contempt; and it may, perhaps, be argued that, even if those names are popularly used, they should not be authoritatively recognised by such an institution as the National Gallery, where absolute historical accuracy should be observed. It seems to us, however, that it is only at first sight that this new move can commend itself to our judgement.

There is an old classical proverb—which is familiar to many who are by no means classical scholars, for Lord Lytton has made English readers acquainted with it in the pages of "My Novel"—to the effect that "It is a pity to alter what does very well as it is;" and this proverb the authorities of the National Gallery might, with profit, have laid to heart before they meddled with the sobriquets of the great painters. Indeed, the alteration is to be deplored on two grounds: firstly, that, if persisted in, it will cause an immense amount of confusion without any adequate compensating advantage; and, secondly, because the increase of accuracy thereby secured is very much more fancied than real.

As regards the first point, it should be remembered that our National Gallery is


frequented—as it is intended it should be; and as it is much to be desired it should continue to be—not only by students and connoisseurs of painting, but by the great mass of the population, possessing, on the whole, little or no knowledge of art or art history, and that to deprive such visitors to the national collection of the only names by which they have ever heard of the old Masters, and replace them by a string of unfamiliar Italian patronymics, is of, to say the least of it, doubtful advantage to any interest concerned. Those names, nicknames though they may be, possess the prescriptive rights derived from three or four centuries' uninterrupted use, during which period they have been adopted with practical unanimity by compilers of catalogues and by engravers. To decree, in these latter days, their abolition in favour of any other system of nomenclature would be to court inevitable and hopeless confusion as to the identity of the painters and their works—a risk which it is surely not worth running unless the advantages to be set against it are certain and solid.

And, secondly, as regards the question of accuracy, it may sound somewhat paradoxical, but it is nevertheless the fact that these nicknames of the great painters were far more truly the "proper names" of those who bore them than were the surnames with which it is proposed to supply their place.

It must be remembered that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the use of surnames, as now understood, was by no means universal in Italy or in any other European country, and was, indeed, practically confined to the upper and upper-middle classes; the very possession of a surname implying that the family could boast of a settled position and a descent of at least some few generations.

Now, few of the old Italian Masters were of gentle birth—Michael Angelo, who was of the noble Florentine house of Buonaretti, and Leonardo da Vinci, who was the natural son of Ser Piero da Vinci, notary to the Signoria of Florence, were exceptions to the general rule. Many were not even of the middle classes, but were the sons of small tradesmen, of artisans, even of peasants; for, in the great republic of the arts, in those its palmy days, there was no royal road to success, and merit was the only gauge. And, if we examine further into the matter, we shall find that the use of these nicknames, which are now to be proscribed, is sanctioned not merely by the

custom of posterity, but by contemporary authorities, and even by the painters themselves. Take the case of the great Master, who has been known for nearly four centuries as Andrea del Sarto. Vasari—whose celebrated work, "The Lives of the Painters," still remains, notwithstanding certain errors of judgement and inaccuracies of dates, the standard authority on the subject—writing some twenty years after the death of Andrea, whose friend and pupil he was, observes that his master's father was a tailor; "for which cause he was always called Andrea del Sarto by every one" ("sarte" and "sartore" being the Italian equivalent for the word tailor). Certain it is that on the "Holy Family," now in the Tribune of the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, which is accounted the finest of his easel pictures, he has so described himself in the Latin abbreviations, "And. Sar. Flo. Fab." which we may translate, "This is the work of Andrea del Sarto, the Florentine."

Again in the Latin inscription on the monument raised to his memory by his pupil and heir, Domenico Conti, in the Church of the Servites at Florence, his name figures as "Andrea Sarto;" and in this connection we may remark that throughout Vasari's long and careful biography of this Master, he makes no mention of his family name, and that it is only from an annotation that the reader will learn it to have been Vannucchio, "Andrea's father having been one Michelangelo Vannucchio, whence the painter styled himself, sometimes Andrea Vannucchio, sometimes Andrea d'Agnolo, or Di Michelagnolo Vannucchio, and in a receipt given to the Abbess of Lucca, Andrea d'Angiolo del Sarto." No sooner, however, has the reader possessed himself of this knowledge than up starts another commentator with the information that the artist's name was not Vannucchio at all, but merely Andrea d'Agnolo. The painter's monogram  is cited as corroborative evidence by both sides; the believers in Vannucchio maintaining it to represent an A intertwined with a V; the holders of the contrary opinion explaining it as two As, one inverted. Who, after this, can maintain that things are made any clearer, or more accurate by deserting the nickname for the patronymic!—surely the name which the artist himself inscribed upon his masterpiece, which his sorrowing friend placed upon his tomb, which his pupil and historian employs to the exclusion of any

other, is good enough for the use of posterity to the end of time. May we not hold that in erasing the name of "Del Sarto" and substituting that of "Vannucchio," we should be dethroning the captain for the problematical, the substance for the shadow?

If we consider the various sobriquets of the old Italian Masters we shall find them fall, as regards their origin, into three classes; that is to say, they are referable either to parentage, natural or adopted; to locality, such as birthplace or early residence; or to some distinguishing personal trait, either mental or physical. To the first of these classes belongs, besides Andrea del Sarto, whom we have already considered, the great Venetian painter, Tintoretto; a Master whose works—being chiefly of enormous size, and executed mostly in fresco on the walls of public buildings—are comparatively little known in this country, and, indeed, are not to be studied to perfection except in Venice. This artist again was called after the trade of his father, who was a dyer ("tintore" in Italian). His real name was Jacopo Robusti, but it is hard to believe that he was commonly so called by his contemporaries, for Vasari, writing during his lifetime (indeed, the author of the "Lives of the Painters" predeceased Tintoretto by some twenty years), invariably speaks of him by that nickname.

The name of the brothers, Antonio and Pippo Pollaiuolo (the Italian for a "goldsmith"), also signifies the calling of their father, or, as some hold, their grandfather, for the father was styled Jacopo del Pollaiuolo, the son of the goldsmith; indeed, in this family we find no trace of any name save that of the trade; which is, we may note, a very common source of surnames in all countries, our own included, where we find such instances as Baker, Butcher, Cook, etc., and where the frequency of the name of Smith is referable to the days of armour and its makers.

The Pollaiuolos were goldsmiths, painters, and sculptors of the early Florentine school; and at least one important work of Antonio's, "The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian," is in our National Gallery.

We may now consider three Masters, who, dropping their own names, adopted from gratitude those of their first instructors in the paths of art.

We can all remember the pathetic prig, immortalised for us by Mr. Du Maurier, who declared that he was always mute before a

Botticelli. What, we wonder, would have been the demeanour of this devotee of the new emperied cult if brought face-to-face with a weak bearing the name of Alessandro Filipepi? Such, however, was the original name of that early Florentine Master, of whom several important examples—and notably one from Hamilton Palace—are to be found in our national collection. Alessandro's father, Mariano Filipepi, "a Florentine citizen, brought up his son with care," so Vasari tells us, "and caused him to be instructed in all such things as are usually taught to children before they choose a calling. But although the boy readily acquired whatever he wished to learn, yet was he constantly discontented; neither would he take any pleasure in reading, writing, or accounts, inasmuch that the father, disturbed by the eccentric habits of his son, turned him over in despair to a gossip of his, called Botticello, who was a goldsmith, and considered a very competent master of his art, to the intent that the boy might learn the same." Out of gratitude to the goldsmith, who emancipated him from a life of ledgers and day-books, and opened to him the possibilities of art, the young Sandro adopted his name. Similarly the Bolognese Master, Francesco Francia, whose "Holy Family" and "Dead Christ" are among the finest treasures of the National Gallery, dropping his family name of Raibolini, adopted from gratitude that of Francia from his master in goldsmith's work; and Lorenzo di Credi, the son of Andrea Sciarapelloni, assumed the appellation by which he became famous, both to his contemporaries and to posterity, from his teacher Maestro Credi, the Florentine goldsmith.

Of those painters who derived their nicknames from the place either of their birth or of their first celebrity in their art, the list might be indefinitely prolonged. It will suffice for our purpose to mention a few of the most important names. Piero Perugino—justly celebrated for his own works, but perhaps more celebrated as having been the master of Raphael—was the son of Cristofano Vannucci, and was born at Castello della Pieve, whence, in his eleventh year, he was sent to Perugia, and there acquired the first rudiments of his art. It appears from a contemporary inscription at Perugia, in which he is styled "Petrus Perusinus," that he was called "Perugino" in his lifetime; and surely no one ever deserved to be identified with a locality more than did this painter

with the city of his adoption. He invariably returned thither after his occasional absences in Florence and Rome, and during his long life he beautified its churches and public buildings with the choicest works of his genius.

Antonio Allegri, the son of Pellegrino Allegri, a man in very humble circumstances—a wood-cutter, according to some accounts—was born at Correggio, in the Duchy of Modena, and by the perfection of his art has rendered immortal the name of his birthplace, which he adopted as his own. Many of this great Master's works are in this country; but the finest are in Italy, and especially at Parma, where he spent the greater part of his life.

Of Francesco Mazzuoli, called "Il Parmigiano" from the fact that he was born in Parma, there is an admirable specimen in the National Gallery, namely, "The Vision of St. Jerome," originally painted for the Church of San Salvatore del Lauro at Città di Castello.

Giulio Romano, the favourite pupil of Raphael, whose name Shakespeare, with his usual disregard of chronological accuracy, introduces alongside of the oracle of Delphi into "The Winter's Tale," was a native of Rome, of the name of Pippi. He was celebrated as a painter and as an architect; but the proficiency in sculpture with which our great dramatist credits him, appears to be another exercise of poetic license on the part of the "Swan of Avon."

Paul Veronese—whose fine painting of the "Family of Darius at the feet of Alexander" adorns the National Gallery, and whose "Marriage at Cana" is one of the chief glories of the Louvre—was Paolo Cagliari, born at Verona, but, as a painter, of the Venetian school.

The name of Il Spagnoletto denotes the Spanish origin of José Ribera, born at Xativa, in Valencia. He went early to Italy, studied under Caravaggio, and was a prominent member of the Neapolitan School.

The great French landscape-painter, whom we usually call Claude, but, sometimes, from the province of his birth, Claude Lorraine, was really named Claude Gellée, the son of poor parents, who originally apprenticed him to a pastry-cook. After receiving some instruction from his own brother, who was a wood-engraver, he managed to reach Rome, where he became cook and colour-grinder to a painter named Tassi, and so worked

his way upwards to the very foremost place among landscape-painters in the history of art.

When we come to consider the names derived from personal peculiarities, we find instances to which the word "nickname" is far more applicable than to any of the foregoing cases. Take the example of Masaccio, otherwise Tommaso, son of the notary, Ser Giovanni di Mone (Simone) Guidi, called "Della Scheggia." Of this painter, Vasari tells us that, "He was remarkably absent and careless of externals, as one who, having fixed his whole mind and thought on art, cared little for himself or his personal interests . . . inasmuch that he would give no thought to his clothing, nor was he ever wont to require payment from his debtors, until he was first reduced to the extremity of want; and for all this, instead of being called Tommaso, which was his name, he received from every one the cognomen of Masaccio, by no means for any vice of disposition, since he was goodness itself, but merely from his excessive negligence and disregard of himself; for he was always so friendly to all, so ready to oblige and do service to others, that a better or kinder man could not possibly be desired."

This nickname is, of course, merely a corruption of the painter's Christian name, arrived at by dropping the first syllable of Tommaso and adding an affix indicative of contemptuous disapprobation, more or less good-humoured. The Italian language is rich in these terminations bearing a special significance.

Such, though of just the opposite import to the sobriquet of poor Masaccio, was the name of Giorgione, which was bestowed upon the great Venetian Master, Giorgio Barbarella, of Castelfranco, "as well," we are told, "from the character of his person as for the exaltation of his mind," and was, therefore, of complimentary import.

The diminutives, Il Pinturicchio—meaning "the little painter"—and Domenichino, by which Bernardino Betti and Domenico Zampieri were respectively known, are probably signs of affectionate regard; while the by-name of Guercino commemorates the fact that Gianfrancesco Barbieri was afflicted with a squint. By the name of Sebastiano del Piombo, we are reminded that that great Venetian Master, during the latter part of his life, held the appointment at Rome of "Frate del Piombo," or Monk of the Signet, the functionary to whom was confided the duty

of appending the seals of lead—"piombo" being the Italian word for lead—to the official documents of the Papal See. This painter's family name was Luciani; but it is only on his earliest pictures that we find his patronymic; his later and best signed works bear the inscription, "Sebastianus Venetus," preceded—in the case of those executed subsequent to his appointment to the Signet—by the initial F (frate). This artist's great picture of the "Raising of Lazarus," in the National Gallery, possesses a special interest, apart from its distinguished artistic merit, from the fact that it was painted in rivalry of Raphael's "Transfiguration," now in the Vatican; and that Sebastiano is supposed to have received assistance in his task from no less a hand than that of Michael Angelo himself. Certain it is that there are in the British Museum two original drawings by Michael Angelo, which are evidently preparatory studies for the figure of Lazarus in Sebastiano's picture.

To pursue the matter further would be easy, but for considerations of space. Enough, however, has, perhaps, been said to show how little stress was laid by the old Masters themselves, or by their contemporaries, on those surnames which the authorities of the National Gallery wish to affix to their pictures. Indeed, we may note in passing that many painters, who never received nicknames, are ordinarily spoken of by their Christian names alone, so much so that it requires in some cases an effort of memory to recall their surnames; thus every one knows Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Titian, while to the comparatively few would the names of Buonarrotti, Sansio, and Vecellio, convey any definite meaning.

Surely we are not going too far in saying that we prefer even the most personal of the nicknames we have cited above. Besides the arguments we have already advanced as to the example of the artists themselves, their contemporaries, and the subsequent usage of succeeding ages, it seems to us that there are other good reasons against the proposed change—that it is better that we should be reminded that one artist was the son of a tailor, or of a dyer; that another was a sloven, or had a squint, than to have our memories burdened with some Italian patronymic of perhaps doubtful authenticity, which the painter alone has redeemed from absolute obscurity.

We seem to know these great workers and their works the better from possessing

these little details as to their appearance, their parentage, or their birthplace, which their nicknames, and their nicknames only, have preserved to us. At any rate, if their family names be considered worth preserving, let it be only as subsidiary to, and not in substitution for, those more familiar forms.

NAPLES IN PANORAMA.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THE magic of the sunshine does such wonders for the plainest architecture in southern Italy, that the exteriors of most of the churches in Naples seem unimposing at the rare intervals when the sun does not appear. The builders cared little or nothing for Corinthian, Doric, Ionic, or Renaissance. Their edifices are crowded into corners on hill sides, or in populous thoroughfares in the valleys, where magnificent porticoes and imposing flights of steps are entirely out of the question. Often, the front wall of a church is not even protected by stucco; the primitive ugliness of the brick stares you in the face. Over the main entrance is a Rococo marble structure—a kind of religious coat-of-arms—now and then disfigured with gaudy colouring. The doors are provided with heavy quilted curtains, usually very old and dirty, to keep out the sun in summer and autumn, and the wind in winter. An unornamental fringe of beggars about the steps serves to strengthen the foreigner's unfavourable impression.

But within each church all is decorous, artistic, and rich. The weight of Catholicism makes itself thoroughly felt. There is nothing perfunctory, as in France and one or two other Catholic countries, about the devotions of the men; both male and female worshippers are in earnest.

I went into one church in the San Lorenzo quarter, on a week-day morning, and remained an hour for the purpose of observing the people. The shabby entrance had not prepared me for the vast and splendid hall, with its noble ceilings and its rich lateral chapels, into which I came. The paintings were more noteworthy for size than for quality; but the marbles were all good, and their number seemed legion. Many of these lateral chapels were the gifts of rich parishioners, and their descendants from generation to generation have vied with each other in adding memorial tablets, statues, and altars. In front of many of the chapels were women praying aloud in high,

cracked voices. Near the chief altar stood a majestic old man, dressed in a showy uniform partly covered by a cloak. He seemed a fixture; indeed, I do not think he moved his body while I was in the church. But I saw that his eyes followed all my movements.

Naples, as every one knows, is the city where people talk with their hands, and this they do in church as well as in market or in the drawing-room. I observed a singular instance of this in conjunction with the performance of the confessional.

On either side of the main aisle, in this church, were long rows of boxes, at the windows of which women were kneeling, pouring forth their real and imaginary sins to the directors of their consciences. The windows were so arranged that the priests sitting within the boxes could not see those who came to confess; but the front was open. In one of these boxes sat a priest in such a position that I could not see his face; but I was able to make out the whole tenor of his remarks to the woman under confession by the eloquent movements of his thin white hands, which peeped from his black sleeves and moved incessantly to and fro on the polished wood of the chair front. What astonishing variety of movement in these hands! The gestures were not made for the woman, who could not see them; they were the necessary accompaniments of the priest's speech, and, had his hands been tied, I doubt if he could have spoken at all.

Cequelin, the famous French actor, often appears in a little piece in which, for half-an-hour, he does not utter a word; but represents the injured and misunderstood husband, responding solely by various motions of his hands and arms to the impassioned and rather abusive monologues of his wife.

But this priest of Naples could have taught Cequelin many a lesson in gesture. I watched these white hands as they expressed deprecation, condemnation, surprise, pity, energy, authority; and I could not repress a smile when, at the close of the confession, the priest spread out his hands twelve or fifteen times in succession with wonderful rapidity, which I was certain meant the number of prayers that the good woman was to say in pursuit of some particular penance. Without once seeing the priest's face, it was easy to form an accurate idea of what manner of man he was.

In this quarter of San Lorenzo it was

evident that a great part of the population had material, as well as moral reasons for supporting the Church; for clearly the Church supported them. There are whole streets devoted to shops where images of the Saints and Martyrs, Bambinos and Madonnas, are made and sold. The quantity of these objects is so great that I should think every worshipper in Naples must possess at least a dozen. The tastes and purses of all classes are consulted. There are Madonnas of huge proportions, and little ones which may be purchased for a few soldi. The colours are nearly all glowing, the contrasts are violent, and often shocking to one whose eyes have been artistically educated. The southern Italian does not understand the use of colour, although the heavens and the earth both supply him with the most ample lessons in exquisite harmony and grouping. I noticed one little shop in particular, kept by a counterpart of Quip the dwarf, who had piled, in most appetising confusion in his windows, minis and contadini, brigands and martyrs, beggars and apostles, fishermen and monks, Bambinos and boatmen—the secular and the religious so inextricably co-mingled as to form a most ludicrous and picturesque whole. Another window certainly contained a thousand of these figures; and the merry workers, seated on benches in the open air, were busy with preparation of others. Buyers at wholesale and retail came and went. Many thousands of these images are sent over sea to the constantly growing Italian colonies in the Argentine Republic, and in other sections of the two Americas. The gaudiness of the Madonnas destined for shops and dwellings is quite indescribable; barbaric is not the word to express it, for barbaric idols are often less gaudy. But there is rarely anything grotesque in the religious figures; the artist is reverent, by instinct, in the treatment of his subject. It is a trifle shocking, however, to hear the workmen engaged on these pious figures interlarding their conversation with the oaths and ejaculations which are so common, and are thought so little of, in Naples. It is recorded of the great Mercadante that he once used an expression of this kind in presence of the Queen of Naples, at a concert given by her command, so unconscious was he that a habit had become second nature. Language is naked and unadorned on the lips of the middle and lower classes in the Neapolitan district;

and the foreigner who proposes to reside in Naples must be prepared to endure this. There is very little real politeness, alas, among these same classes. They are sympathetic to a certain extent; and I think the accusation of treachery brought against them is unfounded. But they are not polite. Even the shopkeepers have no particle of the deference so common in other portions of Italy, and in France and England. Of course, in the higher classes, the best Italian traditions of good breeding are preserved intact.

Around the churches and the theatres flock the poor and the dirty, for it must not be supposed that all the poor are uncleanly. I should think there is more decent and respectable poverty in Naples, than in most cities of seven hundred thousand inhabitants. The number of families who live on the most Lilliputian incomes is astonishing. The wages paid to employes of a very respectable grade are strikingly small. It is not uncommon to see a man with a family earning only five-and-twenty, or thirty, lire per month; yet the numerous family lives, in spite of a taxation which strikes the stranger as ruinous. The family lives, lodging in small compass, because most of its work is done out of doors, even in the crowded sections of the city; and eating in the economical fashion common to the southern Italian. The staple food of a family to which the provider can only bring a franc, or a franc-and-a-half per day, is by no means meat. "Carne" is known to thousands upon thousands of humble Neapolitans only by name, and the chances are that they would not like it if they had it to eat. Fish is consumed in great quantities, particularly the cod-fish, or *bakalan*, prepared in many appetizing ways with oil, with vinegar, with vegetables. A huge pot of macaroni, or some other of the hundred and one Italian pastes, or of beans, or of cabbage, or other greens, is prepared every day, and around this the family gathers once a day; the other meals are limited in character and number by the day's chances. The phenomenal ingenuity of the cooks in making something out of nothing is a source of constant surprise to a new-comer. The potato is looked askance at. Wine and oil are cheap and plenty; a quart of pure wine costs seven or eight soldi, and a quart suffices for the temperate requirements of quite a large family. Fruit is of course to

be had for very small sums. An industrious poor family therefore can get enough to eat; but never thinks of meat, or of such substantial repasts as the poorest English occasionally will have.

Hundreds upon hundreds of Neapolitans appear to have no occupation, or to be engaged in some trifling business which can scarcely pay expenses. These people live without getting into debt, but how they do it is a mystery. Then there are the thousands who are far down in the social scale, and who earn nothing, or only a chance penny from time to time. These are all philosophers; they bask in the sun on the pavements with the greatest satisfaction, and are nearly naked and not ashamed. Among them are many who never have worn a shoe or stocking, and whose feet have not been washed for many a season, save by the rain, or a plunge into the harbour. The encrusted dirt is quite fearful to contemplate. The women of this class appear never to take off their clothes, and to have insuperable objections to combing their hair. There is little beauty among these women, and the stamp of ignorance is very perceptible. The serpent trail of the Bourbon dynasty is still visible in many things in this section of emancipated and united Italy.

The universal heaviness of taxation in the Italian peninsula falls with especial force on the small commercial man and the petty cultivator; and it is said that, in Naples and the surrounding districts, the Government sometimes takes as much as sixty per cent. of the receipts. There are all kinds of taxes, which are remorselessly collected by an army of hungry-looking employes, who heap expenses upon the heads of unlucky delinquents. These taxes are the reason why all cabmen, boatmen, guides, cheap pedlars of curiosities, and innkeepers insist upon overcharging foreigners, every one of these classes reasoning that it is clear gain if the foreigner can be made to pay the tax. Every district, and every smallest community near Naples has its little house at the entrance, where the Government collects taxes on articles entering. The peasantry seem to pay cheerfully, because they realize that much of the money is spent in strengthening and improving the national defences, and in securing the nation's dignity. Furthermore, not much criticism of taxation, or any other governmental action, is permitted.

Everywhere is heard lamentation because

of the lack of capital, and the newspapers are filled with advertisements offering from fifteen to twenty per cent. for money. "An honest young commercial man" makes a stirring appeal for fifteen thousand lire to put into his business, announcing that he is willing to pay twenty per cent. per annum for it, and to repay within five years. It would be interesting, if possible, to follow his case, should he obtain the money, and to learn where this manner of doing business would land the honest young commercial man.

In Naples, a handsome business structure is a "palazzo;" a broad, principal thoroughfare is a "corso;" and every mushroom company is an "Institute," or a "Banca." The natural grandiloquence of the language easily aids the new eagerness for ostentation and glitter. But there is much solid progress. New quarters have sprung up, as by magic, along the hill-sides, bordering the charming sweep of the semi-circular "Chiaja;" and the well-paved streets are thronged with private and public conveyances, and with respectably-drilled regiments of troops passing to and from their barracks.

In Naples the open carriage is considered a prime necessity by many thousands of people. A Neapolitan will go without his breakfast in order to appear dashing along the Via Roma or the Chiaja in a "carrozzella." The peasants, the washerwomen, the porters, the coalheavers, all take cabs; and the stranger who does not, is audibly cursed by the fraternity of Jehus. The great Baedeker, purveyor of guide-books to the public, records with honest German "naïveté," that Italians occasionally say to him: "Lici é Signore, e va á piedi!" How, indeed, should a Signore, a real gentleman, walk! Towards evening, in the autumn and winter months, there is a grand procession of carriages along the Chiaja, near the gardens, and thence up the steep and rather narrow streets leading to the hill quarters; and, in point of numbers, the display is at times almost equal to that in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne in winter.

The "Via Roma," as the historic "Toledo" is now called, is chiefly remarkable for the animation which pervades it all day and far into the night. The "carrozzellas" fly through it as if the drivers had a wager that their clients should not have time to look into the shop windows; ten thousand bawling and screaming pedlars hustle the rich and the poor passers, thrusting jour-

nals, matches, knives, clothing, cooking utensils, articles of food into their very faces, and relinquishing their efforts to sell only when driven away.

The patient and friendly ass whisks his philosophic tail at every corner, or places his little grey foot on your varnished boot, or thrusts his black muzz'e under your arm in his endeavours to get across the way with his load. Down the paved alopes rattles a waggon laden with empty wine casks, and furiously drawn by a triple team composed of a white bullock, a lame mule, and a scrubby and dispirited horse, prancing and snorting, and threatening annihilation to anything which comes in their way. Here a bare-footed friar, in a yellow gown, stops to have his hand kissed by an elderly gentleman in black; there a contadina, in yellow and red finery, descends with dignity from a country chariot. Soldiers innumerable; and officers in short grey cloaks, long grey cloaks, African helmets, and black and gold; enliven the scene.

The sun pours floods of light upon the tall yellow houses, and illuminates the most labyrinthine recesses of the side streets with their variegated population of toiling thousands. The omnipresent children yell incessantly; the asses bray; and couples, discussing trivial matters, gesticulate to that extent that it seems as if their hands would fly off at their supple wrists.

Men, whose fierce countenances and excited demeanour might indicate that they are plotting murder, are really discussing some trivial occurrence in the neighbourhood; and the brawny women, shaking their fists in each others' faces, are merely affirming their respective opinions as to the merits of a recently purchased cabbage.

The Neapolitan regards as vivacity and natural warmth of expression that which would seem to us very much like dangerous violence.

TO-MORROW.

"You'll come to-morrow, then?" the light words lightly said,
And gaily she waved her little hand, gaily he bared his head.

"You'll come to-morrow, then?" and the man on his business went,
With a tender prayer in heart and lip, yet on his work intent.

The woman a moment lingered, "he might turn for a parting look,"
Then with half a sigh and half a smile, her household burthen took.

"You'll come to-morrow, then?" and ere that morning broke,
Pale lips, in the crowded city, of the "railway accident" spoke.

A strong man in a stranger's house, in Death's dread keeping lay;
A woman wept her full heart out in a cottage a mile away.

So lightly our thoughts run onward, so lightly we hope and plan,
While Fate sits grimly by, and smiles, to watch his plaything, man

Discounting the dim, vague future, while his blind eyes cannot see
What a single flying hour may bring; where the next dark step may be.

And Love floats laughing onward, and by his side glides sorrow;
And men and women between them walk and say,
"We'll meet to-morrow!"

BILLIARDS.

THERE are few more cheerful sights, when the evenings are long, and the weather dull, than a handsome, well-lighted billiard-room, with the smooth, green surface of the table; the ivory balls flying noiselessly here and there, or clicking musically together. The sense of comfort and "sans gêne" makes the billiard-room one of the pleasantest resorts of a country house, and the most alluring retreat for those who take their ease at a country inn. And the game itself has the advantage of being interesting and exciting enough as a trial of skill, without any particular stake on the result being necessary; and it is as much enjoyed by the tyro—that is, if he plays with another tyro—as by the skilled performer; by the urchin, who can just see over the table, as by the veteran, who can hardly manage to hobble round the board. It is a game, too, which rests the brain, or leaves it free to work as it pleases; and if the game does not exactly favour thought, it does not exclude it. A certain amount of bodily exercise, too, is involved in the progress of a game of billiards.

Of course, it is possible to be too fond of the game, to the waste of time and money, and with nothing to show for it all. But what good things are there which may not be thus abused? And the dangers of billiards attach chiefly to public rooms of a certain class, or to the rooms of clubs, where gambling is a specialty. Against domestic billiards there is nothing to be said. Indeed, an American authority declares that, "the billiard-table has become a requisite in every well-furnished

household; and to play a fine game is regarded as one of the accomplishments of every well-educated gentleman."

But if all our homes, even if indifferently well-furnished, are not provided with billiard-tables, and if there exist many otherwise fairly-educated gentlemen who are but indifferent performers with the cue, yet there are evidences everywhere of the spreading popularity of the game. You hear the rattle of the balls in the policemen's quarters, and in the soldiers' recreation-rooms. Workmen play billiards at their clubs; and popular institutes find increased popularity in providing billiard-tables for their members. And with the general diffusion of the game, the skill of its professional players seems also to have greatly increased. Scores are now made which, some years ago, would have been deemed impossible, and large assemblages of spectators are drawn together to witness the performances of the great masters of the game.

It is not an affair of yesterday, this game of billiards, and it has its ancient history, although the precise origin of the game is not easily to be determined. All that can be said about the matter is, that the game was certainly known in the sixteenth century, but that it cannot be so certainly traced to any earlier period. The first manual on the subject—and that but a meagre one—is furnished by William Cotton, the friend of gentle Izaak Walton, who assisted the latter in the "Compleat Angler." On his own account, Cotton published, in 1674, the "Compleat Gamester," which, dealing chiefly with cards and dice, contains a section on billiards. Cotton boldly attributes the game to Italy. It may be that the "Gamester" is right, for, during the previous two centuries, Italy had been the home and origin of all the gentler arts of life. But evidence is wanting; for, in Cotton's time, billiards had been known in England for at least a century. "Few towns of note," saith the "Compleat Gamester"—a gamester super-grammaticam—"which hath not a publick table; nor are they wanting in many noble and private families."

Indeed, from the beginning, billiards was accounted a lordly, and even Royal, game. In the mouth of the Queen of Egypt, the Imperial Cleopatra, Shakespeare places his solitary allusion to the game:

Let it alone: let us to Billiards.
Come Charmian!

Against this, indeed, may be set the equally familiar verse of Edmund Spenser:

With all the thriftless games that may be found,
With mummery and with masking all around,
With dice, with cards, with balliards far unfit,
With shuttlecocks, misseeming manly wit.

The original spelling seems to have been *balyards*, and one cannot feel sure about the *balyards*. It might mean something else—ball-yards, tennis courts, or something of that kind. First of all it is hardly likely that a poet would make a thick word out of a thin one, and again in Spenser's time the game seems to have been considered as a dignified, courtly kind of affair, hardly likely to be classed by a courtly poet among common games of chance, or skill. Was not Mary, the Scotch Cleopatra, a lover of billiards; a game which solaced her weary captivity in England?

Another illustration may be given of the high estate of billiards in those good old times. And this is taken from a Royal inventory of the reign of Edward the Sixth, relating to the furniture contained in the King's house at the Moor, near Rickmansworth—ancient plenishing, tarnished cloth of gold, faded arras, tattered hangings; the paraphernalia of regular semi-Royal State. The house, before it was the King's, had belonged to Cardinal Wolsey, who had, in happier times, entertained his Royal master, Harry, "at his poor house of the More." Well, upon this list of chattels there appears this important item: "One billet bourde covered with greene cloth." Now the King had seized all the Cardinal's furniture as well as his house, and it is not an improbable surmise that the board was originally Wolsey's, and that King and Cardinal might have played a friendly match upon that very "billet bourde," while some noble Duke kept the score.

And this item in the old inventory may throw a little light upon the origin of the name billiards. In its present form it is probably derived from the French. But Littré seems to show that the billiard was originally the club, or stick, with which the game was played; a meaning which the English billet—the hard billet of wood, not the billet doux—would faithfully render. But whatever the name of the instrument, the thing itself was not like the latter-day billiard cue. In the seventeenth century, the billiard was a curved piece of heavy wood; the striking part of which was faced with horn, or ivory, or mother-of-pearl. It was held loosely in

the hand as one holds a pen, and the ball was struck as with a club after the fashion of hockey, or the more courtly "pall mall." The table was of much the same shape as at present, and there were "holes called hazards with nets" as in the modern tables, but at first at one end only of the board; one in each corner and one in the middle. An ivory arch, called the port, was placed at one end of the table, and at the other a small ivory column, like a chess king, and called by the same high title. The game as described by Cotton was played with two ivory balls, for already the billiard ball was an emblem of smoothness, as Ben Jonson writes:

Even nose and cheek withal,
Smooth as is the billiard ball.

With ball in hand the player takes his stroke, and "to win you must pass the port and touch the king," but without flooring His Majesty. "To hinder your adversary you hazard him," or put him in the hole, when he has to begin again. While, if you hole yourself, or are hazarded by your adversary, you receive the same penalty. Hence the terms winning and losing hazard.

John Evelyn, in his diary, mentions a foreign table which he saw at the Dutch Ambassador's with "more hazards than ours," probably with the six pockets which are the complement of the modern table. And the game thereon was played without port or king, and the balls struck with the end of the stick.

It was long before the conservative English dispensed with the port and king, foolish adjuncts of the game, which crop up now and then in later times in the form of skittle-peol, or some such inanity. And when an alteration was made it was due to French influence.

In France the game had long been in favour. King Louis the Fourteenth was a great lover of billiards; and his magnificent nobles, in their grand perukes, his Marshals and Generals, matched their skill against their Royal master's, about some elaborately inlaid billiard-table in the Royal saloons of Versailles. One Chamillard is recorded to have gained a high office of state from his skill at billiards, which the King delighted to witness. This was the same Chamillard

Qui fut un héros au Billard
Et un sèro au ministère.

When the French game was introduced into England, what time the Regency in France brought something like peace and

goodwill between the two nations, it soon superseded the old-fashioned game. It was played, according to contemporary accounts, "only with masts and balls," the masts being the maces, or mace, an instrument still to be met with in billiard-rooms. With the mace the ball is pushed and not struck; and English players adhered to the mace long after it had been superseded on the Continent by the cue. And the mace was considered the lady's weapon even up to recent times.

The French game was played with two white balls, and the play consisted in hazarding your adversary's ball, and keeping out of the pocket yourself, just as single pool is played nowadays. But before the end of the century a third ball was introduced, the red ball, which bore the mysterious name of "carambole." And now to hit the two balls successively became one of the points of play, and the *caram*, or cannon, added a fresh interest to the game. With this came into existence the English game, "*par excellence*," at which all hazards count to the striker, except that unfortunate one known as a *coup*, where his ball flies into a pocket without having touched another on its passage.

Towards the end of last century the cue came into favour among the most knowing players. But as yet it was a very imperfect instrument. It had no "tip" except its own wooden end; and any one who has been condemned to play with a cue without a "tip" may judge how little execution can be done with such a weapon. Chalk was sometimes used as now, to give the cue a hold upon the ball; or, as some players advised, the end of the cue was roughened with a file. If one wanted to strike his ball high, so as to "follow;" or low, that it might stop dead when it struck the other; he might use a cue-cut obliquely for the purpose, which was called a *Jeffrey*, from the name of its inventor.

Early in the nineteenth century came an invention which gave a new life to the game. A French player named Mingaud discovered the advantage of leather tips to cues. Had he lived in the present day he would have no doubt patented his invention all over the world, and realised an immense fortune. As it was, he gave his secret to the world without any particular recompense.

Billiards could now be played with much greater skill and nicety than before; yet still the bed of the table was of wood, and hardly

ever to be obtained perfectly level, and the cushions were stuffed with list, from which the balls rebounded but sluggishly. There are, perhaps, a few of these old wooden tables still in existence; and twenty or thirty years ago many an old specimen might be found scattered here and there in remote country districts. Perhaps it was to be found in the corner of some windy old assembly-room, where the belles and beaux of other days had merrily footed the creaking floor, a rickety old table, the holes in its cloth repaired with patches of oil-cloth. Or it might occupy the lion's share of the club-room, where the tradesmen of the little town met nightly over pipes and gin-and-water.

In the latter case, there was sure to be some old practitioner in the neighbourhood—the barber, perhaps, or the pariah clerk and shoemaker—who might be called in to play a game with the wandering stranger. You might be a brilliant performer under other circumstances, and knew every point of the game; but the old stager knew all the weaknesses of the table, the pockets that drew, and the up-hills and down-hills of the course, the bias of the cracked ball, and the influence of the chip that some jolly swaggerer of old had knocked out of the "red." And then he was used to the cues, with tips the size of a muffin. So that he chuckled mightily over your discomfiture, as he refreshed himself at the expense of the foreign champion.

About such tables gathered our great grandfathers, with their cocked-hats, pig-tails, and hessians, wagering this or that on their skill—generally something to eat or drink. Yet there were fine players among them even then, and especially at such places of resort as Bath or Brighton. The proprietor of a billiard-room at the former place is said to have made the discovery of the "*side-stroke*," that is to say by striking his ball at the side instead of in the line of its central axis, he succeeded in giving it a twist, or spinning motion, in addition to its forward impetus. And this "*side*" he found might be made to modify to almost any extent, the angle at which the ball rebounded from the cushion or from another ball. Other people, doubtless, had practised the stroke, but had kept it to themselves. The man of Bath imparted the secret to his marker, one Carr who was a fine player, and developed the new stroke, travelling about the country exhibiting his skill to the amateurs of the

period. It is said that he attributed, at first, the efficacy of his stroke to the peculiar kind of chalk he used; and that he sold boxes of twisting chalk—to a good profit, doubtless, among those desirous of emulating his skill.

The slide-stroke was still something of a novelty when the use of slate beds for billiard-tables became common. The first examples were made about the year 1827, and, in 1835, india-rubber cushions were introduced, which quickened the play and made the game more lively. The advantages of slate were so great, in the way of providing a smooth and even surface, that wooden tables were in time superseded.

"Gom viz me to London, and dry a slate table," says the Baron von Punter to Mr. Cox, of the "Diary."

And the game, it will be remembered by students of Thackeray, came off at Mr. Abednego's rooms, in the Quadrant, with unpleasant results for Mr. Cox.

This was in the year 1839, or thereabouts, when a player, known as Jonathan of Brighton, was the champion of the cue. "Jonathan, who knows his play, can only give Cox two in a game of a hundred," appears in notices to correspondents, as quoted by Mr. Cox, from the "Flareup," weekly sporting journal. He was an excellent, careful player, this Jonathan, and wrote a very good treatise on the game, under his real name of Edwin Kentfield. He was acknowledged as champion till 1849, when he had to lower his cue before the all-conquering John Roberts.

Kentfield's best break was a score of one hundred and ninety-six, while Roberts's record reached three hundred and forty-six; but this included one hundred and four spots, and would not be now looked upon as an extraordinary performance. Indeed, the son and successor of Roberts, John the younger, scored the other day, in a spot-barred match with Cook, the grand total of six hundred and ninety, a feat not likely to be surpassed by any one else just yet at all round play. The champion of the spot-stroke has scored breaks of over two thousand, nearly all completed by that famous stroke.

A word about the spot-stroke may here be interposed. For those who have not studied the game it may be explained that the spot is a black mark like a wafer, at a distance of eighteen inches from the top cushion, upon which the red ball is placed at the beginning of the game, and

whenever it has been holed thereafter. Hence it can be "hazarded" into either of the top corner pockets by a ball in position on either side of the spot. To attain this position and stop there, crossing from one side to the other, as the red ball is continually holed, is the aim and object in life to the spot-stroke player. Yet it requires an almost miraculous accuracy of eye, and delicacy of touch to perform this stroke, near four hundred times running, as Peall has done before now. It is magnificent, but it is not billiards. What becomes of the game with its interest, its life, and movement, if all the play is confined to a series of almost identical strokes?

The Americans boast that with them the spot-stroke is impossible. And, indeed, the American game has taken a somewhat different developement to ours. The so-called American game is played with two red balls, and for winning hazards only, and cannons which may be single, or double, as two or three balls are "caramboled." But this game has been, since 1873, superseded by a three-ball game differing from the English game in many points which there is not here space to elucidate. The Americans legislate against long runs and overpowering breaks, and gain their object by ingeniously extending the area and disabilities of the baulk. The Americans, no doubt, got their original impulse in billiards from the old French game. But since the Revolution, billiards in France have also been revolutionised. The cannon game is now almost exclusively played in France, and hazards and pockets altogether discarded. But the game excites no such general interest in France as with us.

TIPPING.

THERE is an old-fashioned street in an extremely sober and sleepy town of Stafford which rejoices in the name of Tipping. It is not very far from that "Swan Inn" which was immortalised by Dickens, on a certain rainy, dreary day, under the title of "The Dodo."

The name of Tipping is suggestive. Whether the gentleman, who once was the proud owner of it, ever expected that it would one day pass, if not into classical, at least into popular English, is not told us. But the term "tipping" is supposed to have been derived from this same street, which probably gained its title from some obscure and modest-minded person, who

little thought of the halo of popularity which was to grow round his name when he was forgotten.

The cause of its adaptation to one of the most important systems in our daily existence is not perhaps exactly creditable to the ethics of Tipping Street. In the days when the world had not become as moral as it is to-day, or, probably, had not learned so well the art of not being found out, the inhabitants of Stafford and its surrounding localities used to assemble during the elections, in Tipping Street, and there, with the guilelessness of cheerful innocence, sell their votes to any one of the contending gentlemen who happened to make it most worth their while. There was an Arcadian simplicity about this which should be respected.

A small and ragged Sunday-school boy, whose reasoning powers were in advance of his years, when asked one day to contribute a penny to a foreign mission, sat thoughtful for a few seconds, and then declined to share that penny with unknown little blacks in the centre of Africa, expressing his opinion that it was no kindness to teach them different things; for if they were taught, and then did wrong, it would be bad for them, whereas, now, as they knew no better, nobody expected anything from them. The School Board and the moral training of his Sunday School weighed hard on himself, and he spoke feelingly.

Perhaps, if those irresponsible voters, who thronged Tipping Street before the political world had become so extremely critical, had lived in these days of complicated ethics, they might have felt a little like that small, ragged boy. Bribery and corruption are unpleasant epithets to be hurled at your head when you only want to live in peace and quietness with your neighbours, especially those more fortunately placed in social position than yourself.

And if you are of a simple frame of mind, with no taste for subtle reasoning, you find yourself unable to see the difference between selling your vote in the public thoroughfare of Tipping Street, for a five-pound note, and giving it to the husband of some great lady, who lays her beautiful, delicate hand in yours, and, smiling ravishingly up into your bewildered eyes, promises that you shall have that new chimney put to your roof. The chimney, or the smile, or the dainty touch, or perhaps all combined, prove

as irresistible a tip as the five-pound note.

There are two sides to the question of tipping, as there are mostly two sides to every condition existing on this planet. Some people look at it from one aspect, others from the second. The tipper and the tipped take their place on a totally different standpoint, and their vision is naturally varied. The tipper may even feel a keen desire to apply the toe of his boot to the person of the individual he is tipping, but he must suppress his feelings and hand him the sovereign or ten shillings as the case may be, in obedience to the law of social life, which compels us to offer up this sacrifice to appearances. Our friend's butler may have handed our last new hat to another visitor, who, we may have strong reason to believe, will never relinquish the prize, and presents us, with solemn deference, with the old one left in its place; and we must hide our emotion and tip him, as if we were truly glad to receive our own again. The ill-concealed insolence of the smart-liveried footman as he helps us on with the shabby overcoat, which has seen more winters than it should have done pass over our respected head, has to be rewarded in a similar fashion. The friend's gamekeeper who has uttered with a grin in an audible whisper to the man next you, who has just brought down the bird you missed, that it would be safer for him to stand in front of you, looks out at the end of the day for the sovereign with which you smilingly present him, wishing all the time you could at least make a hole with it through him instead. You feel in your heart, that, for once that day, you might distinguish yourself as he stands there, civil and solemn, but with the consciousness of all your wasted shots beaming in his eye.

The schoolboy who has frightened his maiden aunt into fits by his daring escapades in her trees, or on her roof; who has driven you nearly wild by his joyous and sublimely indifferent disregard of all your out and dried rules of life, expects a parting tip, as if you were both broken-hearted at the withdrawal of his peace-destroying presence. You give it, knowing that it will be hastily laid out, to the waste of your hardly-earned coin, and to the danger of his constitution, and that probably all the glory you will gain in the one-sided transaction will consist of the patronisingly affectionate exclamation uttered to the

other young vandals aiding in the consumption of the tarts you could not help saying: "He's not a bad old treat, as uncles go." The maiden aunt, in her turn, has also sacrificed under the law of tipping by cramming, with noble festivity, a hamper full of deleterious luxuries, overlooking the sad fact that her cockadee has an addition—the reverse of complimentary to her fellow-creature—to its vocabulary; and that her poodle has not yet recovered from the severe act of shaving it underwent privately one morning, causing her dismay and grief unpeakable. But if we suffer, we suffer in good company.

Poor royalty laments over the costly system of present-giving, which its exalted position necessitates, when it pays visits, and often wisely decides to stay at home if the family exchequer happens to be rather emptier than usual.

The very conditions of our social life are interwoven with this web of tipping. For tipping itself takes many forms. It is not always in the shape of hard cash. Perhaps, after all, that is the easiest tribute to pay, and one, too, which, measured after the standard that makes a man's self of more importance than his pocket, involves the least loss to himself. There is the tipping that turns the tipped into a kind of moral daemon, upon which any man of rank and influence may wipe his shoes. The fawning servility, the fulsome adulation, the pandering to petty desires and ignoble passions, are all so many tips paid to Fortune, who appears for the time in the guise of powerful statesman, or influential noble, or wealthy merchant. Perhaps it is but fair to say, that this moral tipping may seem on occasions to be unconscious.

For instance, when, being of an artistic temperament, you admire, with great fervour, the decidedly reddish locks of your chief's favourite daughter, seeing in them the burnished gold in which the painters of old delighted, you may, or may not, know that you are tipping the man in whose hands your future prosperity rests. It is lucky for you that you have artistic tastes, that is all. And when promotion comes, you would be highly indignant at being told that it had reached you through anything but your own merits. It is just as well; and, as tipping and being tipped will probably endure until there is another universal deluge, we had better make the best of it, and try, with worldly wisdom, to get as many tips as we give.

"A LITTLE BIT OF TENNYSON."

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

"CAN you tell me, please, whether this is the road to Stretford?"

It was a mild November morning, sunless, but with sufficient light to make any bit of vivid colour stand out in sharp relief against the surrounding grays and browns. The scene was an English country lane, muddy and narrow, with no house or other sign of human occupation in sight. The place was altogether so deserted that Maurice Carrington, riding to a distant meet through byways with which he was imperfectly acquainted, felt the sudden apparition of a tall, slim girl—coming through a wicket-gate communicating with a field-path into the lane—quite a godsend.

He checked his horse as he spoke, and bent forward with easy grace to hear what she had got to say. He saw that she was not a lady; but he was a gentleman, and to be otherwise than courteous to any woman, gentle or simple, was not in his nature.

She hesitated so long, before answering, that he repeated his question. He little guessed the inseparable mischief that was done, as there broke suddenly upon the startled vision of a simple country maiden the radiant apparition which was never hereafter to leave her haunted senses day or night. He was the born ideal of a young Englishman of degree, as he sat his noble hunter, his scarlet coat throwing into bold relief the handsomest face Beattie Peters had ever seen, or was ever likely to see. She looked, and looked, and looked again; simply spell-bound beneath the frank gaze of the gray eyes fixed upon hers.

Seventeen though she was, she answered "Yes, sir," as timidly as a little child.

"Oh, then that's all right!" he returned, visibly relieved. "I was afraid I had taken the wrong turning at the cross-roads. So I keep straight on?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how far is it?"

"Three miles, sir."

"Three miles! Thank you. Good morning!"

And lifting his hat slightly, with a half-smile which revealed beneath the faint moustache of early manhood such treasures, in the way of white and even teeth, as had never before dawned upon Beattie's

startled comprehension—good teeth in remote rural districts being the exception rather than the rule—he set off again down the lane, his mind full of his own affairs, and with no thought or remembrance of the girl whose heart was destined to ache for him for many a weary day. Whilst he was talking to her, his quick eyes had taken in every detail of a slender, unformed figure, drowsily dressed in unbecoming garments not smart enough for a servant, but certainly not those of a lady. Her features were also unformed; and so small and childish that, although she had rather nice brown eyes, it was assuredly not a face, the mere recollection of which would make the heart of handsome Maurice Carrington, the wealthy young Squire of Grenby, beat faster in all time to come.

She, poor soul, sank down on a big stone by the roadside, and sat there in a dream—such a dream as is only possible at seventeen. She was not more susceptible than the average of girls. She had been strictly brought up, and was of a degree in the social scale above that of the vulgar type of young woman, which cannot exchange speech with a gentleman without imagining that he is falling in love with her. Yet she sat in a maze, a hopeless captive to as mad an infatuation as ever girl experienced to her sorrow.

Again and again she conjured up before her the high-bred face with its entrancing smile; again and again she recalled the perfect grace of the unknown young horseman as he bent down to speak to her.

"Shall I ever see him again?" she asked herself, as, at last, she picked up the basket she had been carrying, and pursued her prosaic way; not without a feeling of strange rapture at the consciousness of living in the same world that he lived in; of being, in however infinitesimal a degree, the fellow-creature of so bright a mortal.

Yet, from the very first, she knew her infatuation to be hopeless. Young as she was, she could not deceive herself on that point. She knew it was impossible that a finished gentleman—as even her inexperienced eyes at once perceived that this young man must be—would ever bestow a second glance upon little Bessie Peters, the miller's niece. She had been educated at a cheap school; she was accustomed to associate with common people; she was dowdy, and awkward, and ill-dressed—she had read all her demerits with fatal ac-

curacy in the magic mirror of those fine gray eyes.

"Oh, if I had only been different!" she sighed, as she trudged along in the mire, in the boots which were not like the sixtieth cousins of those varnished ones which fell into such admirable curves on Maurice Carrington's shapely feet. "If I had only been beautiful—and rich—and a lady—perhaps—perhaps—!"

Ah me!

Graybourne Mill was too prosperous and utilitarian to be picturesque, being the property of a hard-headed old rustie whose sole idea was, to make money. Bessie's uncle and guardian, John Peters, was a leading man in the little village, and, in the eyes of the neighbours, her lot was a very fortunate one for a penniless orphan girl. The miller was a widower, and it was well known that Bessie would, in due time, inherit his property, if she only conducted herself so as to please him. The bucolics were well-advised in putting in this cautious clause, for they had had before their eyes a terrible example in the shape of Bessie's cousin Mary, the miller's only daughter, who, a few years back, had insisted on marrying a strolling actor, rather than endure the awful monotony of village life any longer. An actor! The good people shuddered with horror at the idea of any respectable girl marrying such a degraded being; and not even the reports which reached the village occasionally, to the effect that she was both happy and prosperous in her new career, could prevent them from looking down upon her as a person who had gone utterly to the bad. John Peters cursed his runaway daughter with all the fervour of a narrow mind; and the acerbity of temper, which rendered him more feared than beloved in Graybourne, was charitably attributed to "the dreadful troubles he had had, poor man!"

Nevertheless, he looked a stolid, unromantic Briton enough, as Bessie took her place, two hours later, at the dinner-table in the mill kitchen. She was all overflowing with a secret, shy, exquisite delight; which, for once, rendered her oblivious of the unpolished manner in which her uncle ate and drank, and dipped into the salt-cellar whatever article of cutlery came first. Bessie's parents had been residents of a great town; she herself had seen enough of manners at school to know that the people of Graybourne were utter Goths; and there was in addition a

substratum of natural refinement in the girl which made the red-tiled kitchen, the coarse table-appointments, and her uncle's rough ways very repellent to her. To-day, too, there was an additional aggravation in the presence of a young farmer, Martin Bowman, a neighbour of theirs, who was Bessie's special detestation. Round-faced, fair and foolish, he grinned incessantly at everything that went on; and, while he and the miller monotonously discoursed of turnips, after the manner of rustics, her thoughts floated away in a dream. She pictured her unknown hero sitting down to table amid the glitter of plate and glass, the scents of hothouse flowers, and the soft tread of liveried domestics; and, poor little girl! her heart ached as it had never ached in her short life before.

She was recalled to a sense of present surroundings by an observation of Martin's, who remarked: "T' young Squoire's coom home," with his mouth full. Bessie lifted her eyes with a sudden flash of intelligence, for it struck her that her fairy prince might very well be young Carrington of Grenby, the next village, in which was Martin's home. She had lived long enough at Graybourne to know all the gentry for miles round perfectly by sight; and she listened eagerly for what was to follow.

"What? Young Carrington?" asked John Peters.

"Yes, he's been abroad, completing his eddication! My! Won't he have a mint of money of his own! Good-looking chap too. I met him this mornin', turnin' out o' the Hall gate in pink, goin' to the meet at Stretchford no doubt, for he was mounted on as pretty a bit of horseflesh as I've seen this side Christmas—a bay with black legs." That settled the identity of the young stranger, for Bessie at once recognised this description of his horse. "They say madam's so pleased to have her son home again that she's goin' to give a big ball and supper to all the tenants. If she does, will you promise to give me a dance, Bessie?"

"She is not likely to invite me," said the girl coldly.

"Bless you, mother and the girls will be sure to be asked, and what's easier than for you to go wi' us? In a white frock, wi' a red rose in your hair, you'd look real pretty, Bessie," urged the kindhearted young farmer, who was not without a sneaking admiration for this girl, whose subdued tints were in such strong contrast to most of the village belles.

"There are no red roses now," she said, seriously.

"They can be had for money," hinted Martin, significantly; and then John Peters effectually changed the conversation by asking his guest if he had got a good price for the white heifer he sold on Saturday.

When the things had been cleared away by the old woman who attended to the heavier domestic duties of the mill—thereby enabling Bessie to enjoy what the villagers were wont to describe as "a lady's life"—the two men sat down by the fire to smoke their pipes. Bessie sat for a few minutes, pondering over the entrancing figure which had been dancing before her eyes all day; then rose and hastily donned her dowdy brown hat, saying she was going to see Miss Bertha.

Her uncle offered no opposition, and in a short time the girl had traversed the whole length of the village, and was knocking at the side door of the ivy-covered Rectory—the one aristocratic abode into which she was privileged to enter. It was a mere form to ask the parlour-maid if Miss Bertha were at home, for the Rector's daughter never went out. An incurable spinal complaint kept her a close prisoner to her room; and, as her father was a wealthy man, every luxury was lavished upon his only daughter. It had pleased Bertha Haskett to take rather a fancy to the pale-faced girl in whom her trained eye perceived the germs of better things, and, in a patronising way, she encouraged her to come to the Rectory, and took some pains to cultivate in her a taste for good literature and occupations of a higher stamp than those which satisfied the other village girls. It was, perhaps, a doubtful kindness to make the girl more dissatisfied with her lot than she was already; but it was Bertha's whim, and no one dared to say her nay.

The invalid was an intellectual-looking girl of twenty-five, whose keen blue eyes had the haggard look of suffering. Her little room was decked with every charming adornment imaginable, and, as she contrasted it with the mill kitchen, its aspect caused Bessie to heave a deep sigh of relief.

"Well, child," began Miss Haskett, kindly enough. "I'm glad to see you. I was wishing some one would come in and enliven my solitude, for father has gone to Wellborough. Take off your hat and sit down and make yourself comfortable."

Bessie blushing complied, although it was quite out of her power to enjoy the

last injunction. She was never at ease in Miss Haskett's company, for she felt the social gulf between them too deeply; and yet she was happier in Bertha's little sitting-room than in the mill kitchen, though nobody at home noticed whether she was sitting awkwardly, or if her hair was not neat.

They chatted for a little on village topics, Bessie's demure "Yes, Miss Bertha," and "No, Miss Bertha," scarcely breaking the ripple of the elder girl's monologue. Then Miss Haskett, pointing to a book-case, said:

"Get out the 'French Revolution,' and read me a chapter, Bessie."

Her ill-health prevented her from reading much for herself, as the weakness of her spine also affected her eyes, and Bessie had long been accustomed to act as reader. She obediently found the volume, and began. But to-day the tangle of hard words and involved meanings seemed harder than usual, for in her mind's eye she saw nothing but a handsome, boyish face, swimming in a magic haze of scarlet and white. Presently Bertha checked her with her hand.

"You are evidently not in the humour for Carlyle to-day, Bessie. You read that last page atrociously. Try some poetry instead. There's Tennyson there."

Again Bessie obediently complied, and, being bidden, read "The Lotos-Eaters," and "Mariana," fairly well. And then Miss Haskett said:

"Now give me a little bit of 'In Memoriam,' as a tonic to finish up with."

The girl turned to the poem rather reluctantly, for until then that sublime requiem had been miles above her comprehension. The simpler sentiments and more commonplace phrases of "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," and "The May Queen," were better suited to her undeveloped mind.

"Where shall I begin, Miss Bertha?"

"Oh, anywhere," said the invalid, with closed eyes. "I know it all by heart, and it is all beautiful—and true."

Anxious to get her task over, Bessie began where her eye chanced to rest first:

"He passed; a soul of nobler tone:
My spirit loved and loves him yet,
Like some poor girl whose heart is set
On one whose rank exceeds her own.

He mixing with his proper sphere,
She finds the baseness of her lot,
Half jealous of she knows not what,
And envying all that meet him there.

The little village looks forlorn;
She sighs amid her narrow days,
Moving about the household ways,
In that dark house where she was born.

The foolish neighbours come and go,
And tease her till the day draws by;
At night she weeps 'How vain am I!
How should he love a thing so low?'"

Her voice faltered at the end, and she sat silent, filled with thoughts too deep for words. She had turned to the poem as a mere task, and lo! the master-mind had presented to her, as in a mirror, the living image of herself. Word for word, line for line, it was all true; just what her life must be from henceforward, as though revealed to her by an inspired prophet. The ache and the longing, the weariness and discontent, the hopelessness and self-torture; there they all were, focussed in the brief compass of half-a-page.

"Bessie," said Miss Haskett, looking curiously at her thoughtful face, "are you aware that you read that little bit exquisitely? I doubt if the finest actress alive could have put more expression into the words than you did. There, shut the book; we won't have any more to spoil the effect of that. What's the matter, child? Do you know, when you look like that, with your cheeks flushed and your eyes sparkling, you—really—are," with a critical side-movement of the head, "quite pretty?"

The girl impulsively flung herself on her knees beside the couch and seized Miss Haskett's hand. "Oh, Miss Bertha, do you really mean it? Do you think I shall ever be really, truly pretty?"

"You silly child," rebuked the Rector's daughter. "What does it matter whether you are pretty or not? Handsome is that handsome does. But if you are really curious to know," she added, relenting a little at the sight of Bessie's abashed face, "I may say that when you were reading that bit of Tennyson you were pretty; though, why you were so then, and are not now, is more than I can explain. Now ring the bell, and you shall give me my tea."

Thus coldly relegated to the domain of common-sense, Bessie collected herself, and endeavoured to forget her new-born hope of one day being fair enough to please his eyes, in the occupation of preparing Miss Haskett's cup of afternoon tea.

The following day she trudged into the market town to buy a cheap copy of "In Memoriam;" and again and again she pored over the wonderful lines until she

knew them by heart. She made an excuse on Sunday morning to go over to Grenby Church instead of attending their own at Graybourne; and, concealed behind a pillar, watched Maurice Carrington as he brought up the rear of a file of well-dressed people who entered the great Hall-pew. In his sober Sunday coat he was not the radiant vision he had been in the lane; but his features, if anything, looked handsomer in the subdued light of the painted windows than they had done in the full glare of day; and whatever little hope there was left for Bessie's peace of mind was gone from that hour. She sat in silent adoration, feasting her eyes upon his face until the blessing was pronounced, and the people streamed out into the churchyard.

The poor moth fluttered round the candle until existence became a burden. She haunted the neighbourhood of Grenby, heedless of weather and personal discomfort; more than rewarded if, hidden behind some tree, or screened by an angle in a wall, she could catch a glimpse of her hero, afoot with his dogs or his gun, or driving his dog-cart or mail phaeton.

The neighbours wondered "what was come to the lass," for she was silent and abstracted in company. The mere sight of the Hall chimneys, peeping through the trees, would make her foolish heart beat quicker. She would steal into the park, and, securely hidden from observation, scan the house with its stone portico and long lines of windows, wondering which were his rooms, and whether the colony of rooks in the elms awoke him by their cawing in the morning.

She spent much time, also, with Bertha Haskett, who seemed, in a far-off way, a kind of link between her and Maurice; for the Hasketts and the Carringtons were on terms of intimacy. Bessie also eagerly seized every opportunity of getting Miss Haskett to correct her country pronunciation, and to give her hints on etiquette and the usages of society. Bertha laughed at her eagerness to improve herself, but consented to assist her with some really valuable advice; and Bessie felt that every day she was improving both in mind and manners, and, thanks to the care she now took to cherish her complexion and her other personal advantages, in looks also.

Returning from the Rectory in the dusk of one January afternoon, she found visitors in the mill kitchen—Martin Bowman, and his stout, voluble, good-natured mother.

"Bessie, lass," began the young farmer, in his lumbering way, "I've brought you such good news that you ought to give a chap a kiss."

"Go away, Martin!" she cried, in great indignation, eluding the laughing attempt he made to seize her in his arms.

"We're not lookin', Bessie; so don't be shy," urged his mother, with rustic playfulness.

"Kiss Martin when he wants you, and ha' done wi't," growled John Peters, from his corner.

But Bessie had long ago resolved that the lips of no man, save one, should ever be permitted to touch her cheek in future, and she resisted so strenuously that Martin had to give it up, considerably crestfallen at being denied what the free and easy manners of his circle regarded as so trivial a thing.

"Dang it, Bessie, if I'd known you were gettin' so stuck up that you can't spare a kiss for an old friend, I'm blest if I'd ha' taken the trouble to come to tell you there's goin' to be a grand ball at the Hall, and we're invited, and we want you to come wi' us—if so be as you're not too proud."

"Proud!" said John Peters, angrily. "Don't ye fret yourself, Martin. She'll come to her senses presently, never fear."

Bessie debated within herself what to do, pleasure and pain being equally present within her at the news—pleasure at the thought of going to Maurice's home; pain at the idea of only being there in a subordinate position in the company of these vulgar Bowmans. But the wish to see, and, perhaps, speak to Maurice, finally carried the day, and she promised to go, to Martin's unconcealed delight.

Mrs. Carrington, eager to conciliate her neighbours, with a view to Maurice's probable standing for Parliament before long, had strewn her invitations with no sparing hand; and a huge crowd of tenants, tradespeople, and other dependents, with a sprinkling of the gentry of the county, was the result. It was such a gathering as is only possible in the country; and if the rustic ideas of costume made the hostess bite her lips to hide a smile, her guests in other ways were inoffensive. Their manners might be boisterous, and their notions of dancing archaic; but they were very ready to be amused, and entered into the spirit of the thing with such zest that it made her labours very easy.

Bessie's heart beat fast as she followed her companions into the long ball-room.

Brilliantly lighted and decorated with hot-house plants, it seemed to her like fairy-land. She had never seen anything so beautiful before. As if in a dream, she watched Mrs. Carrington, suave and smiling in her black velvet and diamonds, shake hands effusively with Mrs. Bowman, Martin, and the Misses Bowman—two blowsy, giggling girls, whose costumes were about the loudest in the room. Then Mrs. Bowman pushed her forward, and in confusion she shyly slid her hand into the widow's firm grasp. She thought that Mrs. Carrington looked rather hard at her, as well she might, at seeing her so totally different from her companions. Bessie had wisely allowed her innate refinement to govern her choice of a dress, and rejecting the gaudy colours and many trimmings of the Bowman girls, looked, in her simple white muslin, with a red rose presented by Martin, not only pretty but distinguished.

And then the floor seemed to burst into a bloom of roses, and a celestial music sounded in her ears, as the lights swam before her dazzled eyes. He was coming! Another minute and he was in their midst. He looked very handsome in his careful evening dress, and more experienced eyes than poor little Bessie's found the young Squire the most attractive object in the room that night. As he shook hands with her companions, who were old acquaintances, Bessie's famished gaze devoured every inch of his face and figure.

Years after, she could recall every minutest detail: the gardenia in his button-hole, the pattern of his watch-chain, the single eye-glass which dangled over his white waistcoat, the artistic curls of his brown hair, which, had she but known it, were not without assistance from the skillful curling-tongs of his valet. Bessie thought them more lovely than anything she had ever seen, and would have cheerfully died then and there in order to possess one.

After a good deal of laughing and talking, each of the Bowman girls permitted him to inscribe his name on her programme for a dance; and then, to Bessie's great mortification, he hurried off to greet some fresh arrivals, so that she was left out in the cold without so much as a touch of his hand. She wished she had not come, and angrily snubbed Martin when he tried to make things pleasant for her in his clumsy way.

"I don't know why you're so cross, Bessie; but I can tell you, you look real

pretty to-night," observed the young farmer, as they concluded a scurrying polka. Bessie only tossed her head in reply, with a bitter sense of her own impotence. What was the use of looking pretty, if Maurice did not notice her? She watched him going about the room, chatting to the old women, dancing with the young ones, and more especially with a graceful girl in pink who belonged to the county set, until she wished she had never been born. Bertha Hackett's pupil was quite out of her element that night. The vulgarity of the people she knew sickened her; and to watch the great ladies and their cavaliers enjoying themselves, floating easily through the dances of which the rustics made such hard work, rendered her more miserable still. Fretful and discontented, she repulsed Martin, and the other young men who would have been glad to dance with her; and sighed for the unattainable in the shape of Maurice Carrington.

Her melancholy face, as she sat moping in a corner, at last caught her hostess's eye; and next time she encountered her son, she caught him by the sleeve.

"Maurice, there's a poor little thing there who has scarcely danced at all to-night. Can't you find a partner for her, or give her a turn yourself?"

"I was going to have this one with Dora; and these rustics are so dreadful to dance with," he complained peevishly. "They drag me about all over the place, until I feel quite exhausted. They can't waltz. Galops and polkas are the only things they seem to care for, and I do hate them so!"

But he allowed himself to be persuaded by his mother, who led him up to Bessie and introduced him, although she had quite forgotten the girl's name. When the miller's niece saw the gardenia bending over her, her first wish was that the floor would open and swallow her up. Then, in desperation, she rose and took his arm.

"It's a polka," he said, resignedly, as the music began. "You can't waltz, I suppose?"

"Yes, I can," she returned quietly.

She had learnt that accomplishment at school.

"We'll waltz it, then," he answered, visibly relieved; and amid the wild gyrations of the rest, that smoothly-gliding couple were a relief to many an eye. They did not talk much; Bessie was too shy, and he was absorbed in thoughts of Dora Yorke, the pretty girl in pink. But it was

rapture to Bessie to feel his arm encircling her waist, his firm young fingers grasping her gloved hand; and that dance ever after remained one of the brightest spots in her life. He took her into the supper-room and supplied her with refreshments, which she was too nervous to enjoy, making conversation the while upon such topics as were best adapted to the comprehension of a simple country maiden. Then he took her back to the ball-room, where, for the rest of the evening she got on better; for young Carrington, having found out that she waltzed well, introduced her to some of his own particular chums, who patronised the unassuming girl until the Misses Bowman were green with envy at seeing how well little plainly-dressed Bessie was succeeding among the gentlemen.

"Do you feel inclined for another turn?" Maurice carelessly asked, meeting Bessie, on her last partner's arm, in a doorway, as the musicians were playing the opening bars of the concluding dance. Her foolish heart leaped up as she answered that she should be very happy; basely deserting poor Martin, to whom she had promised this last galop. She felt so ineffably flattered that Maurice should choose her, of all the girls there, for his partner, that she would not have changed places with any queen alive. Poor child! He merely asked her because Dora Yorke, to whom he had been engaged, had been obliged to leave early, and all the other girls of his own set were already provided with partners.

"I hope you have enjoyed yourself!" he said, pleasantly, as the music stopped.

She gave one upward glance at him, which struck even him, in the self-absorption of confident young manhood, as peculiar, and answered, breathlessly, "Oh! so much!"

"I am glad to hear it," he affably assured her, as he shook hands; and, mechanically, Bessie followed the Bowmans to the big lumbering vehicle in which they had come.

She said nothing during the drive home, but sat in a dream, alike oblivious of the chaff of the girls about her having "danced with all the swells," and Martin's anger at her cavalier treatment of him. A pair of grey eyes, a gardenia, a dangling eyeglass, filled all her thoughts.

Her dream was destined to have a rude awakening. She was to stay a day or two at the farm before returning home, and as

she followed her hostess into the small front sitting-room, Martin said, suddenly:

"Have you heard the news, Bessie?"

"What news?" she returned, coldly.

"Why, there's goin' to be a weddin' at the Hall, soon. Th' young Squire's engaged to Miss Yorke, that young lady in pink everybody saw he is so sweet upon, and his mother says they're to be married in April."

"I'm very tired," said Bessie, in a spent voice, as the dingy little room swam around her. "If you don't mind, I think I had better go to bed."

But, when she had safely locked her door upon the outer world, no sleep came to visit her haggard eyes. On her knees, with her face hidden in the bedclothes, she passed through such an agony as it is given to few girls of seventeen to know. Her grief, of course, was absurdly irrational, and she felt it to be so, even amid its deepest pangs; but the thought of seeing Maurice married to another woman was more than she could endure. It was the death-knell of all her hopes; if hopes they could be called, of which she had all along known the utter futility. It took away all purpose from her life. There was no use, now, in cultivating her mind, and trying to perfect her manners. There was nothing left to live for. As long as Maurice remained unmarried she could cherish the illusion that, some day in the future, when by some magical transformation she had become beautiful, accomplished, and in every way worthy of him, he might fall in love with her; but now she could no longer deceive herself. The dream of her youth would never be realised. The dead level of village monotony was to be hers all her life, without a glimpse of anything better.

"Unless," thought she at last, as she began to unfasten her crumpled ball-dress, "Unless I leave Graybourne, and try to make a way for myself. But, whatever I do, I will be worthy of him! Even if I can never marry him, I will still be worthy of him! I will raise myself to his level, not sink to that of the people here!"

A great passion must always be unselfish; and the little village girl, had she but known it, was in that moment little less than sublime. Quixotic, perhaps; but still sublime in her intention never to do anything that might degrade her in the eyes of the man she loved, even though they never met again.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER III. DRIFTING.

MARCH THE FIFTEENTH—Looking back over the pages of my diary, from the present date to the first day of the new year, I am somewhat startled to find that I have—for some occult and mysterious cause or another—been treating it as one might a friend, long trusted, confided in, chatted to—spoken to "with naked heart"—and then suddenly put out in the cold. I find entries of "cases"—bad cases, interesting cases, unruly cases, hopeful cases; but little or nothing—mostly the latter—of the case of Louis Draycott. A surgeon's day-book might contain as much sentiment.

And yet has it been an "empty time" with me since the night I wrote those last lines of personal history in my journal for January the first? I have made this book the record of my life, the confidant of thoughts and feelings told to none other. Is there any reason why I should have broken the thread of record just when it grew to have some deepened interest?

My heart has slept so long—a drugged, unnatural sleep, perhaps, but deep and sodden as the sleep that follows long-continued anguish—that its awakening is painful. One part of me has lived—that which works and suffers for and with those around me; another part of me—that which could grasp something for itself, and hug the beautiful thing close—has lain dormant.

Let me take up some of the matter-of-fact threads that are left broken short off,

before I yield myself a complete prey to visionary fancies and wild imaginings.

First, I will take up a grey, homespun thread, yclept David Bramble. Many times and oft since last my pen traced the old man's name upon these pages, have David's friends and relatives prophesied—brazenly before his face—that he would "go off sharp;" that he was "a-goin' rapid," and that they should "all follow on to him" before long—this last a graceful way of alluding to a well-attended funeral in his honour. One old woman told me that his legs were gone "as yaller as a duck's foot;" another, that "he dropped his jaw when he wur sleepin'—a sure sign, sir, as no one knows better than me, as has watched so many."

At both these latter statements old David looked uncomfortable. It cannot be pleasant to be told that your legs resemble those of a duck; nor yet that you make a fly-trap of yourself in your sleep. But the spiritual exhortations of his family evidently try David most. And need I say that these exhortations are endless, or that they are uttered as much to display—to me—the piety of the speaker, as to edify the sick man?

"He'd oughter be resigned, Mr. Dracnt—that's what I tell him day by day, and hour by hour. It's the Lord's will as he's afflicted, and he'd oughter be resigned."

They say the worm will turn if you only tread upon him enough. David turned—uneasily under his counterpane, and, with a twinkle in the eyes beneath his shaggy brows, delivered himself thus:

"Well, I be resigned, bean't I? You see, sir, it is like this—there's no way out on't. If so be as the Lord had left the door ever so sma' a sample ajar, I'd ha' squizz'n through, never fear; but bein' as

I'm hitched fast here, and strappit down, and He's shut the door toight i' my face, why, I'm resigned enoo', so I be. What else is there for me for to be?"

The son, who is now gate-keeper, is much shocked at this reasoning, more so than he is wont to be by all the blood-curdling curses and blasphemous words of the most unruly culprit in our prison. It has often been borne in upon me that a death-bed, with the consequent funeral, is among the greatest pleasures of the poorer classes. For the time being, a relative of theirs is the centre of general interest. If he or she make a "good end," that is, a picturesque exit from the stage of life, a subject of edifying conversation is provided for months—perhaps even for years. It is seldom that anything dramatic comes into the lives of the poor; when it does, they make the most of it. Understanding these things to be so, I was not surprised at hearing David Bramble's son mutter, as he turned away from the bed: "Father might show a little pious feelin', I do think."

The old man looked troubled. He had an idea that he was not acting up to what was expected of him, and yet he had only spoken out the thought of his heart. I saw the working of the shrivelled hand upon the coverlet; the tremble round the drawn lips; the look of pleading puzzlement in the shrewd, grey eyes—shrewd still, in spite of the dimness that was stealing over them.

I was glad to be left alone with David, and set to work to smoothe the wrinkles from his thoughts. We spoke of One who "began to be sorrowful and very heavy" at the prospect of leaving those dear to Him on earth—whose soul became "exceeding sorrowful even unto death," at the thought of suffering and separation.

"Happen then he knows about t' little wench, Tottie?" said the old man, with a tremble in his voice, and a clutch at the coverlet; "happen He knows how lonesome she'll be when she looks into t' ould bed and foinds no gran'fayther a-watchin' for her? Happen He knows how lonesome I be a thinkin' on 't?"

"Yes, He knows," I said in answer. "He knows all about that; He has felt the same. And He is glad that His gift to you of the child Tottie has given you so much happiness, David."

"I reckon He knows a mort o' things," said David, with an awed and solemn look. "There's a lot o' folk i' the warld, and

such a sight o' trouble among 'em, and such a sight o' contrariness. I wouldna wonder"—this with a sly twinkle in his eye—"but the Lord knows how loth I wur to gi' up keepin' t' gate-way, and lettin' the bad 'uns in, an' seein' the sad 'uns out. Eh! but I wur contrary over that, and I could ha' throwed things at George mony a time, thinkin' as he stood i' my shoes."

After this, we got chatting about the North country, where David hailed from, and then the "little wench" came in with some violets in her hand, and,

"See, grand-dad!" she cried, "here's posies. School-teacher give 'em to me; ain't they sweet 'uns?" and held them to his withered old nose.

"Springtime's on us," said David, sniffing them, "an' happen I'll get the taste o' early cabbage as I longed for; but I'm a contrary chap, and now that Heaven's let me have my way and stay to see t' spring, I'll be after wanting to wait the summer for a sight o' a rose or two; and I allus did love the fall o' the leaf. So there's no tellin' when I'll be ready to quit."

The others came in, and I was just taking my leave, when the old man's skinny fingers beckoned me to his side again.

"I'm glad He knows about t' little wench," he said in a whisper, as I bent down to him.

And there lay Tottie on the coverlet beside him, curled up like a kitten, with her poxy cuddled to her breast.

I think the trouble of that parting, which cannot be very far off now, will be lightened by old David being led to feel that the Master knows all about "t' little wench," and can measure the ache of the tender old heart at the thought of leaving her. I have oftentimes gone in and found the child softly crooning hymns in the twilight, and seen the old man drinking in every note of the little voice; lying there with his head on one side and the curtain put well back, so as to miss none of the tune; holding up his finger to me so as to entreat my silence until the verse was done; and then making little surprised motions with hands and eyes, getting behind the shelter of the curtain, and saying softly:

"Bean't it a wonder now, how clever she be? Bo' we must na let her see as we count much on't, lest her get a bit heady overt."

They are very happy together, those

two; and when the parting does come, it will leave many a pleasant memory behind for the little one to carry with her in her journey onwards.

Now, to take up that black strand which means John Mogeridge and those he left behind him.

It is not, in reality, very long ago since that dull grey morning on which I—with tongue that fain would cleave to the roof of my mouth, lips ashen dry, and, I doubt not, could I have seen them, ashen pale too—read the Burial of the Dead over a living man. Yet, so much have the lines of my life swerved and changed since then, that it seems quite a long way to look back to.

Never did I do a better turn for any one than I did for Bessy and little Bob when I enlisted for them the sympathies of Miss Birt. Of course, I mean "Aunt Dacia." I had not been mistaken in thinking that the gift of healing lay in the gentle hands and soft, clear eyes of that dear lady. But in a hard and bitter sorrow like that of poor Bessy—a sorrow so cruel that it turns the heart to stone—the process of softening must come before healing is possible; and this needful preparation for the other was to come through a very humble instrument indeed, as we shall presently see.

It is to me a beautiful record to write down here, that the widow and the fatherless were spared from all immediate fear of want by the same generous and noble hand that penned a letter of pardon to the murderer of her son: that letter that lay against the breaking heart of John Mogeridge as he marched to his doom.

This help was, in truth, a godsend; for poor Bessy was not fit to work. Her eyes had still that look of stony grief and fear that only tears could wash away; and tears would not come. Even when her baby died Bessy did not weep. While it was ill she kept it on her lap; moaned over it wearily; spoke but rarely; and, when the poor little convulsed form was stretched out white and still, never once kissed it, weeping, as mothers will kiss and weep over their dead babes, but laid it down upon the bed and sat beside it in dumb, staring grief that found no outlet.

As for Bobby, he brought a great yellow dandelion, that some one had given him, in from the street, and, with some budding notion in his little mind that one should

deck the dead with flowers, laid it upon baby's breast.

"Dat's pitty," he said, looking at it admiringly, with his head on one side; "but why don't Daddy come and see baby before her be's put in the buryin' box?"

Bessy gave a start, as if a knife had touched her heart; and some one hustled Bobby out of the room.

Bobby's life was evidently a puzzle to himself in these sad days that had come upon him. All sorts of problems presented themselves for solution. Where had his dear regiment got to? What had become of the big drum, the kettle-drums, the grand old drum-major with his beautiful stick, the kind adjutant who used to swing him up on to his saddle-bow and give him a ride round the barrack square, on the horse that had—so they said—a white stocking on? What had come of all these good friends of his?

Bobby sat on a very small wooden stool, which was one of his most dearly-prized earthly possessions, and to which he clung tenaciously with a certain dread that it might disappear with the rest. Indeed, I saw him with it on his back on one occasion, looking like a snail carrying its shell. He would sit on this stool, gravely looking at the fire, for ever so long, and then put sudden and dreadful questions to the surroundings. For more abstruse reflections than the wonderment as to where his various regimental friends, animate and inanimate, were gone, stirred the mind of poor Bobby.

"Where does my Daddy be gone to? When will him come back to Bobby?"

We all dreaded a certain deep sigh, and serious questioning look, which were wont to preface such enquiries as these.

One day—a day that was warm with the breath of the coming spring—Bobby sat on his small three-legged throne at the open street-door. One can fancy the sudden gleeful light that came into his chubby face as a dear familiar sound fell upon his ear—a sound distant still, but coming nearer with every moment—a sound he had not heard for ever such a long while—never since his Daddy went away.

There it was, distinct and unmistakable: "Rub-a-dub-dub! Rub-a-dub-dub!"

Up sprang Bobby; over went the little wooden stool. He threw himself upon his mother, catching at her apron and pulling with all his might, crying at the pitch of his shrill young voice:

"Mammy! Mammy! come with Bobby. Daddy does be coming back! Daddy does be coming!"

And all the while the drums kept up their dull, monotonous roll: "Rub-a-dub-a-dub, rub-a-dub-a-dub;" and nearer and nearer came the shuffle and tramp of many feet.

Two poor, tawdry street mountebanks, beating for dear life, and followed by a rabble—that was all.

But the old familiar sound, and the cry of the little child, had pierced through the hard crust, begotten of bitter pain, that bound poor Bessy's heart. She threw up her arms with a wild, despairing gesture; her bosom heaved; her throat swelled and choked; and then—after the long, terrible calm, the storm of passion broke.

Sobs shook poor Bessy from head to foot; tears streamed down her wan and hollow cheeks, while Bobby, utterly quenched by a cruel sense of failure in the matter of "Daddy's Regiment," burrowed his head wildly in her black skirts, and showed a pair of protesting heels to the world in general.

I, coming down the street, saw the tail end of the crowd following the mountebanks; heard the roll of the drums dying away in the distance, and went into Bessy's room to find myself face to face with a group at once strange and beautiful. For me, indeed, that group held the lustre of a divine radiance—the promise of an exquisite and perfect sympathy in time to come.

On one side of the widow—who was now crouched upon a low settle by the fire—sat "Aunt Dacie;" her sweet old face screwed up into an expression of resolution in comical contrast to the tears that were trickling down it; her arms tightly girdled round Bobby, too much awed by his position either to rebel or shout. Poor Bessy had fallen forward, with her face against my darling's breast.

There, I have written it.

They mean so much, those two words! I have never written them, I have never thought them, of any human being before. It is as if a miracle had been worked in my life; as if every colour in its texture had been deepened and brightened; as if a new light shone upon my pathway from above. For, surely, this great gift of light and love comes straight from heaven! All the perfection of this womanly sympathy that, stretching out over and beyond all

difference of caste and class, clasps the poor soldier's widow in those tender arms, and pillows her tear-washed face upon that gentle bosom, is mine.

In the light of that sweet sympathy shall I walk so long as it may please God to spare us two—she and I—each to the other. It were an ill thing that I should grudge poor Bessy her little share of the treasure that would be mine; nay, that is mine for ever and for ever; for even now, as the girl with the face of a child and the eyes of a mystic looks up at me, our spirits speak and touch.

Suddenly, it sometimes happens, some friendship or some love is stamped with the seal of eternity. It is not for now; it is for always. Not for this life only, but for all time. It has the elements of that which is divine, therefore it cannot die.

Such is the love that is dawning for me. If it went no further towards fruition; if some cruel stroke of fate severed the outward ties of nearness and companionship, I should still be a richer man than before. For though all my heart, all my inmost soul, all my fond hopes have gone out to Mazie—to Margaret, Dumphie's "sister," Aunt Dacie's "darling"—yet I have other gains, other gifts that I cannot separate from that diviner one. I seem to have gained a whole family circle; in Aunt Dacie, a mother's tenderness—in Dumphie

I hardly know what to say about Dumphie. It is not only that to me he grows to be a brother in very deed and truth, but that the spectacle of his quiet, self-less life has in it something inexpressibly beautiful and touching—something that seems to put to shame all one's best efforts after good. All that he has done, all that he does, is done so unconsciously—done, apparently, under the simple conviction that any one else would naturally do just the same. There lies the perfection of the whole matter.

I have learnt by this time that sad and dark days have been lived through in the house across whose windows the lonely poplar-tree sways gently backwards and forwards, like a gigantic plume; days when poverty, chill and bitter, threatened the little household. What should have been the boy's patrimony was squandered by the simple-minded, heart-broken father in worthless investments. When he died—never having, so to speak, held up his head since Lucille, his wife, closed her eyes

upon a world that was desolate to him without her—he scarcely left enough to pay the few small claims upon his personal estate. His wife's family would do nothing for the lads. They saw fit to be displeased at her marriage, and vented their ill-humour on the children. Aunt Dacie's little income was strained to the utmost; and Dumphie—poor Dumphie, a high-spirited youngster in the hey-day of a happy school-life, full of hopes and ambitions, quite resolved upon entering the Service, as his father had done before him—came home to learn that all these castles in the air must fall in ruins about him; that the man who had been more than father to him lay dead in a far-off land; that the "Indian pay," which had been so lavishly sent home for "Mazie and the boys," was a thing of the past; and furthermore, that the savings of earlier years had been lost.

Dumphie took all these things very quietly. He was a boy who took everything quietly. But Aunt Dacie, going in to look at him that night as he slept, felt his pillow all wet with tears. And Mazie told, long afterwards, how she had seen him kiss the Mathematical Prize which he won that Term, wrap it in a clean handkerchief, and put it away in the farthest corner of his drawer.

How emblematical of the hopes and ambitions laid aside for ever was that simple action! No more brave tales of the cricket-field were told by Dumphie to the rest, sitting round the fire, or out in the little garden, under the poplar-tree. The boy seemed to have become a man all at once. At prayer time he put amazed Aunt Dacie tenderly aside, and took his place before the open Bible.

"I must be 'Papa Birt' to the rest now, you know, Aunt Dacie, because he will never come home to us any more."

And so it came about that the boy stepped quietly and naturally into the position of head of the household. He did more than this; he became its prop and mainstay. How he managed it all it was given to no man to know.

There was a certain half-brother of Dumphie's own father's—an individual who, from his morose temper, went by the name of the "curmudgeon" among his friends and relatives. In process of time, Dumphie, rendered bold by dire necessity—the timid bird will grow bold through love, and fight for her young—determined to face the "curmudgeon."

Aunt Dacie told me of the preparations for this wonderful visit—the brushing of the overcoat that was, alas! becoming undeniably shabby; the addition of a new button here and there; Margaret smoothing Dumphie's tall hat with her soft, helpful hand, until it looked almost like new; Dumphie himself, with his two last school "reports" rolled up in a business-like manner, and a letter from his late head-master safe in the breast-pocket of the shabby coat. None of them asked Dumphie any questions; he had said he was going to do battle for the boys, and he seemed to have grown so much older than they in the last sad year, that, when he called them "children," no one wondered. They had absolute faith in Dumphie. And, as to his attainments, had they not been told of his beautiful handwriting, so clear, and plain, and neat; and of his gift for figures, which showed the square brow and well-balanced head did not count for nothing?

What passed between Dumphie and the "curmudgeon" was never known save by its results. Maybe the battle had cost more than Dumphie liked to speak of. Anyway, victory was his: that was the great point after all.

He was bound hand and foot to City life and City work: tied to a stool in a counting-house as the galley-slave is chained to the oar; to early hours of a morning, and late hours of an evening; to all the surroundings which, during all his young life, he had most hated the idea of.

But what matter?

The "boys" were safe, the "boys" were provided for. Something in Dumphie's earnestness must have penetrated the rhinoceros hide of the "curmudgeon," and reached his heart.

Stephen and John were to go to school and be trained for the Navy, and Glennie was to follow in Papa Birt's footsteps, and fight for his Queen and country one of these days.

Dumphie rose in favour with the "curmudgeon," who, indeed, ceased to be a curmudgeon at all as far as he was concerned; the lad—for he was little more—toiled and slaved cheerfully early and late; the "boys" worked hard and well, spurred on by the knowledge that brother was toiling for them. Bright, happy days came to the household, so bound together by love, and faith, and devotion. A man is great and good, so it is said, in proportion as he forgets himself. Therefore, Dumphie,

the "brother," like whom there is no other, is both great and good.

But I must finish the record of that day when Bobby thought he heard his dear soldiers coming, and was so glad—and then so sorry.

NAPLES IN PANORAMA.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE vast sweep of the shore of Naples, and its adjacent and dependent cities and villages, from Pozzuoli to Castellamare, offers one of the most varied and animated spectacles in the world. Splendour and misery stand forth in strong relief under the brilliant light falling from the crystal vaults of the cloudless sky; life is buoyant, reckless, abundant. The ragged youth, who is plodding beside a patient ass, is singing at the top of his melodious voice, and with no little artistic effect; he dwells upon the last syllable of each line of the song, as if it were something precious with which he is loth to have done. The still more ragged vendor of vegetables throws a certain harmony into his appeal for patronage. The women darting in and out of the doorways, which open into the dark, cool habitations, alternately shout and sing; even the sedate priest, turning aside from the public park to climb the Ascension di Chiaja, towards his church, is gently murmuring some little refrain. Every one pitches the voice high, and unless the stranger does the same, although he may speak unexceptionable Italian, he will be asked to repeat what he has said.

It is but a few years since the now elegant and majestic Chiaja, fringed with palatial hotels, and banks, and mansions, was a mere strand, the principal objects of interest upon which were the huge and gloomy mass of the Castel l'Ovo—a kind of Château d'If, at present used as a military prison—and a few other picturesque edifices perched on the cliffs. The barefooted fishermen still drag their nets from the Chiaja as they did before the improvements; no one appears to offer the slightest objection. They form a pretty spectacle, tolling at the drag-ropes, and rowing back and forth, especially at sunset, when the sea and sky are magnificent with dazzling colours. Primitive, indeed, is the costume of these men. Patriarchs of sixty or seventy may be seen paddling about, arrayed in cotton shirt and trousers,

which come only to the knee, and with the drooping woollen cap, which is a relic of the Spanish domination. In winter and summer they are barefooted; and not even the sudden cold winds of January and February can tempt them to expend any portion of their slender savings in shoes and stockings. All these men, even the very oldest and seemingly most wretched, sing. Sometimes the songs are the exhalation of a complaint, a protest against the hardness and weariness of life; but not often. For just as the burden of life begins to seem intolerable, Nature assumes one of her most bewitching aspects, and transfigures every common and mean object, filling existence with new variety and beauty. In winter, as in summer, there is a peculiar quality in Naples sunshine which may be characterised as enchanting.

Santa Lucia is one of the most attractive sections of the great Naples panorama. Here stand in respectful rows the sellers of oysters, crabs, lobsters, and "sea-fruit," which is not half bad when once one has found courage to taste it. Along the slopes of the hill are the imposing offices of the naval administration; at every step a noble view of the harbour and the guardian mountains beyond is to be obtained. Across the blue water to the right rises purple Capri, with the Somentine peninsula near it on the left. Still further to the left is Castellamare, with its busy docks and wharves, and then the multitude of towns, large and small, on the Vesuvian slope, and the volcanic monarch himself, with his crown of smoke by day and of fire by night. From a point a little to the right of the Royal Palace the whole harbour may be overlooked. In a perfect day the sky, the sea, and the mountains seem to melt into an opal and blue, out of which peep the graceful lines of spars and rigging of the huge men-of-war, of which there are always two or three in anchorage at Naples, and of the merchant steamers which ply to Messina, Egypt, the India, and Australia, Belgium, Holland, England, and the two Americas. There are not so many small craft, little white-winged sea-birds, skimming hither and yon, as would be seen in an English or American port; but, on the other hand, there are multitudes of small row-boats, in which the waterman disports himself after the fashion of his kind, and, while he labours, alternately swears and sings.

Leaving Santa Lucia, and passing

through the great square, with the Royal Palace and the Theatre of San Carlo on the right, we approach the Government port and the essentially maritime quarter. And here, from the great square of the Municipio, all the way around to Castellamare, the population swarms. What shoals, what flocks, what masses of humanity! all belonging to the humble and uneducated classes. The involuntary and first question which rises to the stranger's lips is: "Where do all these throngs get enough to eat?" And he can answer it for himself simply enough—they do not get enough to eat.

A few hours before sitting down to write this paper, I read in the leading evening journal of Naples that six deaths from hunger were registered last week in one town in Sicily, under circumstances which left no doubt as to the truth of the statement of the cause of decease. But let us not dwell on this sad topic. For the moment let us contemplate, without too deeply penetrating into their distresses, the masses that fill the wide streets, the quays, and the side-avenues; that cluster on the many balconies of the enormously tall houses, and sit in the doorways, and hang on the edges of the monuments. Here the mariner abounds; here are mysterious old men with that cosmopolitanism born of long voyages, walking up and down the side-pavements as if promenading the decks of their ships. One has a boat, another is a cicerone, a third is a tempter to the unwary, a fourth tends a market-stall. These sea-dogs all bask in the sun, and criticize "Tramontano" and "Sirocco," and the effect of those winds on navigation, as well as on the human cuticle.

From the Government docks come pouring out five or six hundred handsome sailors, neatly arrayed, and every one with a half-penny, which he proceeds to invest in a very black and very ugly cigar. Officials, in naval caps and astonishingly blue cloaks, stalk up and down; horses, and mules, and cattle struggle and tremble together as they slip and fall on the steaming pavements, and sometimes half-a-dozen of them go down together, with a driver or two under them. In and out of the numerous steamship offices hurry emigrants from every country of Europe.

Beyond the region of that office is a quarter filled with small shops, and here people are so thick that they almost resent the presence of a stranger. The sail-maker,

seated on a bench made from the trunk of a tree, is chatting with his neighbour, who is fashioning an oar. A little way off, with both his feet luxuriously bathing in a pool of liquid mud, is a fruit-seller, with oranges, lemons, nuts, dates, and figs piled high before him.

In the adjacent market—in the centre of which stands a rich monument erected to Philip the Third, Catholic King—at least five thousand people are gathered. Huge awnings rise above the stalls as protection from the sun. The whole scene blazes with colour; the light is riotous; the walls seem hot with it. Although we are in winter, the flies swarm as in the North in summer.

But the people, closely inspected, look pale, and thin, and worn, especially the women, who drag themselves about listlessly, and seem profoundly weary. No one seems to have any privacy or seclusion, or to want them. In the vast courtyards of the houses people are clamouring at each other all day long, in the open stairways, on the landings. Every one knows what every one else has to eat; and, when the tax-collector calls, what skeleton there may be in the closet.

The women are perpetually holding little assizes at the main entrances, and trying such of their neighbours as they do not like. It is not wonderful that the knife flashes now and then. Most of the disputes which end with the arbitrament of the knife, are not about love or politics, but about money. The punishments are severe; but they do not succeed at all in preventing the quarrels or in restricting their number. The authorities have, in recent years, endeavoured to prevent the carrying of revolvers and knives, but in vain.

The desire to use a weapon, even in a dispute over a trivial matter, seems universal in the lower classes. Passing through a little square on the way to the Via Amedeo one evening, I saw two half-grown boys engaged in an altercation which had arisen over some disagreement in their sports. Boy number one first pushed boy number two, who returned the push with interest. Boy number one then struck boy number two, who returned the blow, and added another. Boy number one then used insulting language to boy number two, whereupon boy number two put his hand in his pocket, and withdrew it armed with a large knife, which he proceeded deliberately to open. At this

juncture, the neighbouring barber interfered, and threatened both boys with the police; but when I left, boy number two still held his knife open and was anxious for a further encounter.

The vendetta still exists in all its primitive vigour in the Neapolitan provinces. The magistrates allege that one of the reasons for the long term of preventive imprisonment to which persons, even accused of homicide, are subjected, is to protect the said persons from injury, and to let the anger of the two parties to the suit die away. "Otherwise, one half of the people of Naples would kill the other half," they say.

Naples annually stretches out farther and farther towards Vesuvius, and acres of tall and rather ugly houses may now be seen on the vast plains, where, a few years ago, appeared only the cabins of the peasantry. These cabins, or stone huts, in which the peasants, who have much rude comfort, are content to live, are exceedingly simple in construction. They consist of four strong and thick stone walls, pierced at front and back by wide entrances, and covered with a vaulted roof made out of a species of concrete. There are no windows, and it is to be presumed that the cabins are, therefore, hermetically closed at night. The furniture, with one exception, is rude, and that exception is the bed, which is massive, and covered with spotless linen and blankets. How the men and women, whom one sees covered with dirt in the fields near these cabins, manage to keep their beds so clean, is a mystery. No work is done in the house, unless the occupant happens to be a weaver; the cooking, the toilette, the hundred occupations of the household, are all performed out of doors. The macaroni-maker hangs his pastes on long poles in front of his dwelling; the dogs, fowls, goats, and cats, run in and out of the shops of the village tailor, shoemaker, and wine-merchant; the naked children roll in the mud in winter, and in the dust in summer; and the flashing sun pours its beneficent light on all this humble life, relieving it of the intense misery which it would possess amid the fogs and smoke of Northern Europe.

On the high slopes above the nearer portion of the city in the Vesuvian plain, is the cemetery, or, rather, the line of cemeteries, where repose the poor and rich of Naples who have "gone over to the majority." The newest and most important one is very beautiful, with its

great groves of cypresses looming up against the exquisite blue of the sky, and with its marble and stone temples showing their majestic proportions through the lines of trees. The route to this new cemetery lies along a hilly road which commands a view of the whole vast amphitheatre of Naples Bay, and the city stretching away beneath Santa Lucia's hill, with domes and towers innumerable, down to the blue water. The entrance to the city of the dead is through a Campo Santo, rather inartistically planted with evergreens and flowering plants, in the centre of which rises the colossal marble group of statues erected by Ferdinand the Second, representing an angel upholding the cross and surrounded by kneeling figures of other angels. From this Campo Santo, broad flights of steps at left and right lead down to the streets of tombs. There are but few graves, in the ordinary sense of the term; but there are hundreds of memorial shrines, each one provided with a vault, in which repose various members of one family. The "Confraternities," churches, societies, all have their tombs, some of which are very imposing structures. The inscriptions are generally models of modesty and good taste, and the sculptures are exquisite. Some of the temples are Roman, others Greek; others, again, Egyptian in form; but there is no incongruity in the grouping. Evergreens are everywhere. There are few banks of flowers and grass, and few crosses. The portrait busts in marble, so familiar a fixture in Italian cemeteries, are seemingly countless. From a hundred points in this charmingly situated cemetery, grand views of Vesuvius and its neighbour mountains, and of the hundreds of acres of vineyard and garden, can be obtained. "Per se e per i Suoi," is a favourite inscription on many tombs, erected at the height of their careers by wealthy and distinguished natives of Naples. They like to climb up, from time to time, out of the clamour and heat of the great Southern city, to the breezy hillsides, where their mortal remains are to find their final resting-place. Great provision has been made in recent years by the municipality of Naples for the decent interment of the poor; and the horrible mockery and desecration of the common ditches is gradually coming to an end.

Funerals, however—except those in which military honours are rendered—still have a repulsively-grotesque character. The body of the deceased is not accom-

panied, as in France, by a long and sympathetic train of friends and associates, but is committed to the care of a confraternity, the members of which are masked in hideous mediæval hats and gowns, with hoods adapted to the face, so that the eyes alone are visible; and these lugubrious maskers are followed by a few old men—professional mourners—in glazed hats, and shabby blue cloaks, the effect of the whole being at first sight almost repulsive.

When I first arrived in Naples, I looked about me curiously for the public reciter or reader from the poems of Tasso and Ariosto, who was once a prominent figure in the market-places and principal squares, but I could not find him; and I think the tramways have driven him into the limbo of lost professions. I found, however, that many Neapolitans possess the faculty of repeating, in extenso, volumes which they have read, and of doing it with marked grace and eloquence. Thus, I once heard a youth, who certainly possessed only an ordinary education, tell the story of the "Promessi Sposi" to a company of a dozen persons with such skill, that it was unalloyed pleasure to listen to him, not the least interesting part of the entertainment being his abundant and appropriate gestures.

The Neapolitans of the middle and lower classes possess extraordinary power for dramatising the most ordinary occurrences, and for magnifying them into something wonderful. The marvellous delights them; they all possess a smattering of notions about external affairs; and their versions of the Garibaldian epoch, and of the liberation of Naples from the oppressor, while full of errors and grotesque mistakes, are vastly entertaining.

The public writer is to be seen in all convenient corners—under the porches of the San Carlo, in the markets, and the parks; and the laughing and blushing maidens pour their confidences into his willing ear, exactly as in Madrid and Seville.

MAUNDY THURSDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY.

MAUNDY THURSDAY is the day immediately preceding Good Friday. It was also known as Shere Thursday, probably from a custom of the priests, who on this day are said to have shaved themselves and trimmed their hair, which had

been allowed to grow during the preceding six weeks. An old chronicle says "people would this day shere theyr hedes, and clypp theyr berdes, and so make them honest against Easter Day." It is supposed that Maundy Thursday was the day on which Christ delivered His mandate that we should love one another, Maundy being a corruption of *mandata*. It is also attributed to Maund—a hand-basket in which the King was accustomed to give alms to the poor. The word Maundy is used by some old authors to denote gifts. Other derivations are given, and Nares says in his "Glossary" that "Dunton, in his 'British Appollo,' conceives Maunday to be corrupted from the mandate of Christ to His disciples, to break bread in remembrance of Him, or from His other mandate after He had washed their feet, to love one another." With better reason it is thought to be derived from the Saxon word "*mand*," which afterwards became "*maund*," a name for a basket, and subsequently for any gift or offering contained in the basket. Thus, Shakespeare says, "a thousand favours from her maund she drew;" and Herrick says—

Behold for us the naked graces stay,
With Maunds of roses for to strew the way.

On this day, in the early part of our history, the Sovereigns of England, or their almoners, were accustomed to give alms, food, and clothing to as many poor persons as they were years old; a custom continued down to the present day. It is of very great antiquity, for Saint Augustine speaks of it in the year 400 A.D. At that time it included the washing of the feet of those who received alms. The earliest definite record we find of the practice is in 1363, when Edward the Third had attained his sixtieth year, and alms, food, and clothing were given to sixty poor persons.

Queen Elizabeth, when thirty-nine years of age, attended by thirty-nine ladies, performed the ceremony at Greenwich, when thirty-nine poor women had their feet dipped in basins of water and dried by their Sovereign, who knelt before them on a cushion, afterwards marking the foot with the sign of the Cross and reverently kissing it. The chronicler adds, that the feet of the women had been previously washed, by the yeomen of the laundry, with warm water and sweet herbs. Afterwards gifts of three kinds—money, broad-cloth for clothes, woollen stockings, and baskets of provisions—were distributed.

In the year 1639 Charles the First, who was visiting York, kept his Maundy Thursday in the Cathedral, where the Bishop of Ely washed the feet of thirty-nine poor men—the years the King had lived—in warm water, and dried them with a linen cloth. Afterwards, the Bishop of Winchester washed them over again in white wine, wiped, and kissed them. To each of these poor men the King gave a gown of very good cloth, a holland shirt, new stockings and shoes, also, in a leathern purse, each one had twenty pence in money, and, in another, thirty-nine single pennies, likewise in reference to the King's age. Lastly, each had a wooden scale full of claret wine, a jole of salmon, and a six-penny loaf of bread.

The last English monarch to perform this rite was James the Second; but at Rome, at Venice, and at Russia it still survives. The remnant of the custom still in vogue in England is the presentation of Maundy money which annually takes place in the Chapel Royal. In the present day the gift consists of four silver coins, ranging in value from fourpence to one penny. These coins, none of which are milled round the edges, sell readily for three shillings the set.

On Maundy Thursday, in Vienna, the Emperor of Austria goes through the time-honoured lesson in humility by performing the ceremony of washing the feet of twelve poor men after hearing high mass in the Palace Chapel. His Majesty always discharges his functions on these occasions in a very impressive manner, and the Empress, when in town, ministers in the same way to twelve poor women. At the conclusion the alms folks are conducted to their homes in Court carriages.

In the miraculous legend of Saint Brandon it is related that he sailed with his monks to the Island of Shape, and "on Shere Thursday, after souper, he weashe theyr feet and kyssed them lyke as Our Lorde dyd to his dyscyples."

GOOD FRIDAY, as the presumed anniversary of the Crucifixion of our Lord, has for centuries been observed with the greatest solemnity throughout the civilised world, and is marked by a general suspension of business.

Good Friday probably derived its name from God's Friday, though by our Saxon ancestors it was known as Long Friday, on account of the length of the fastings and offices ordained by the primitive

Church. It is one of the earliest events celebrated by Christians, ranking in point of age before the Christmas Festival.

Numerous customs and traditions have sprung up in connection with this day, but of all the customs peculiar to it, none is so general as that of eating hot cross buns, and the hearing of boys and girls shouting along the streets directly after daybreak:

Hot cross buns,
One a penny,
Two a penny,
Hot cross buns.

or, which I believe to be the more ancient, and therefore the more correct version:

Hot cross buns! hot cross buns!
If you have no daughters
Give them to your sons,
And if you have neither
Then eat them all yourselves!
Hot cross buns, hot cross buns!
One a penny, two a penny,
Hot cross buns!

In Cornwall, the virtue of hot cross buns is thought to extend not only to the house and its inhabitants, but also to the cattle on the farm. And a writer on Cornish folk-lore says: "In some of our farm-houses the Good Friday cake may be seen hanging to the bacon rack, slowly but surely diminishing, until the return of the season replaces it by a fresh one. It is of sovereign good in all manner of diseases that may afflict the family, or flocks and herds. I have seen a little of this cake grated into a warm mash for a sick cow." Poor Robin, in his almanack for 1753, says of these preserved buns:

Whose virtue is, if you believe what's said,
They'll not grow mouldy like the common bread.

For a century and a half Chelsea was famous for its special buns, as much as two hundred and fifty pounds having been taken on one Good Friday morning at the Chelsea Bun House. On Good Friday morning, 1839, nearly a quarter of a million buns were made and sold.

Many superstitious people believed that if a hot cross bun was broken by two friends, or by two lovers, exactly at the cross, one holding each half, and standing within the church doors before Matins on Good Friday, and the half carefully kept by each, it would act not only as a pledge of friendship, but a surety against disagreement, the act being accompanied by the words:

Half for you and half for me,
Between us two good will shall be—Amen.

A portion of hot cross bun, dried and powdered, has been known to be administered as a specific for the cure of sore throat.

Amongst ancient usages of the day was that strange ceremony known as "creeping to the Cross," from the performance of which even the King himself was not exempt. It was an exceedingly laborious process, not devoid of pain, and is still practised among Catholics. Rings as preservatives against cramp, and superstitiously constructed of the handles of coffins, were consecrated, previous to the Reformation, during this process. Andrew Borde—temp. Henry the Eighth—says: "The King of England doth hallowe every yeare cramp rynges which worn on one's finger doth helpe which hathe the cramps." The distribution of such rings on Good Friday was continued at Westminster Abbey, down to the time of Charles the Second. The ceremony, however, was not observed with strict regularity, as between one distribution and another there were often wide gaps.

In Devonshire, and many other parts of the country, the parings of the toe-nails, cut on Good Friday morning, used to be worn round the neck to charm away toothache.

The eggs laid on this day were thought to have the power of extinguishing any fire into which they might be thrown, and in France the country people carefully collect and preserve them for this purpose.

The French have also a tradition that the hawthorn utters cries and groans on Good Friday. This probably arose from a belief that it was with the hawthorn that our Saviour was crowned. Sir John Maundeville bears this out by quaintly saying:

"Then was Our Lord yled into a gardeyn, and there the Jewes scorned hym and made hym a crown of the branches of the albiespyne, that is whitethorn, that grew in the same gardeyn, and settyn yt upon hys heaed. And therefore hath the whitethorn many virtues. For he that beareth a branch on hym thereof, no thundre, ne no manner of tempest may dare him, ne in the howse that yt ys ynne may non evill ghost enter."

In the West of England, working on Good Friday is considered one of the most deadly sins, and is said to be productive of the worst of bad luck. Whoever washes on this day, say the superstitious, is sure to wash away one of his family, who will die before the year is out. It is, however, lucky to begin the weaning of children on Good Friday, and many people begin to till their gardens on this day, believing that all things put into the earth at the holy season will grow rapidly and return to them a great increase.

Formerly, on Good Friday, a sermon used to be preached at Saint Paul's Cross from a wooden pulpit, surmounted by a cross, next the north-east corner of the Cathedral. The subject of the sermon was usually Christ's Passion.

A custom still prevails in Westmoreland of eating what is known as "Fisgue," on this day. It is a peculiar mess, made of ale, boiled with fine wheaten bread and figs, sweetened with sugar. Fisgue is said to be a perfect remedy for coughs and colds if taken at bedtime.

In connection with the old Spanish Mission Church at San Gabriel, Southern California, a curious ceremony is gone through during Passion Week. On Good Friday night an effigy is placed in the middle of the street, standing before a table, on which is a bottle of wine and a pack of cards. This is intended to represent Judas Iscariot, and the vices of drunkenness and gambling to which the Mexicans are so prone. In due course the effigy is hanged, and then buried in a pit. Another ceremony observed on Good Friday, is the carrying in procession of a representation of the Holy Sepulchre, and early on Easter morning a resurrection is enacted.

At All Hallows Church, London, sixty of the youngest boys from Christ's Hospital attend divine service on Good Friday, at the close of which each receives a new penny, and a bag of raisins. This custom is said to have originated with one Peter Symonds, himself a Bluecoat boy, who by his will, dated 1586, left a sum of money for the purpose.

For at least five hundred years, in the churchyard of Saint Bartholomew the Great, West Smithfield, a custom has been observed of placing twenty-one new six-pences on a particular gravestone, to be picked up by as many poor widows. By the traditional history of this charity we are told that somewhere in the fourteenth century a widow directed by her will that after her decease a visit should be paid to her tomb on Good Friday morning, after the church service, "when twentie of ye porest of ye widows belonging to ye most antiente parish shal receive six pennies."

On Good Friday, 1639, King Charles the First, who was visiting at York, touched nearly five hundred persons for the King's Evil in York Cathedral. Much ceremony was observed about this piece of quackery, and the King was attended by his full Court.

In the year 1639 Charles the First, who was visiting York, kept his Maundy Thursday in the Cathedral, where the Bishop of Ely washed the feet of thirty-nine poor men—the years the King had lived—in warm water, and dried them with a linen cloth. Afterwards, the Bishop of Winchester washed them over again in white wine, wiped, and kissed them. To each of these poor men the King gave gown of very good cloth, a holland shirt, new stockings and shoes, also, in a leather purse, each one had twenty pence in gold, and, in another, thirty-nine shillings likewise in reference to the year. Lastly, each had a wooden casket of claret wine, a jole of silver, and a penny loaf of bread.

The last English Maundy was at Rome, at Venice, survives. The still in vogue of Maundy place in the day the ranging penny mill, thr

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*We stayed,
and low,
a strain,
and pain,
to know
a key,
I looked at thee,
his last.*

*For a moment meet
Thy and mine? I cannot tell.
The music rose and fell
In tender tones and sweet,
A low of triumph pealed above
The mournful minor; then the strain
That seemed so full of human pain,
So sad with human love,
Grew deeper, more divine;
It floated round us like a cloud,
As in the dusk with faces bowed
We lingered near the shrine;
We heard the waves of sweetness roll
About us, near, and yet apart.
Did heart lean then to longing heart?
Soul speak to asking soul?*

I know not, I, but this I know,
The music soothed my lonely pain,
And if my heart go out in vain
To thee—yet let it go.
Ah! though we parted separate ways,
What time the music had an end,
And though our lives may never blend
Through length of earthly days:

I do not grudge thee, dear,
The best I have, a faithful heart,
Nor do I grudge thee happy part
Who have thee ever near:
I am content to love afar
For love's sake only. I can wait
To read the riddle of my fate
Beneath some happier star!

SHEERNESS AND ITS DOCKYARD.

WHEN the stormy winds do blow, there is something of a toss and tumble about Sheerness. Even before that point is reached by one on the downward cruise, the river assumes a very sea-going aspect.

Church. It is or for his tarpaulin and celebrated by (V) reabouts opens out that of age before (V) refuge known as Thames. Numerous as sturdy light-ship at the Nore sprung (V) rises with dripping sides, and the of all (V) and coasting barges stagger along (V) buffeted by wind and waves. Yes, a

it is a wild and watery scene, and what land there may be, wrapped up in the driving sea mist, is not of much account. But, as you hug the Kentish shore, the dark spit of land which stretches out into the troubled waters is a pleasant sight to the fresh-water sailor, for there lies Sheerness, its forts and batteries, rising square and grim over the waters, with building sheds and storehouse beyond.

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is Marine Town, which is a modern
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roll in briskly enough, and where there
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spades, and pails, and where, indeed, you
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far off rises the ancient tower of Minster
Church, which was, once upon a time, the
church of an ancient nunnery, so ancient,
that it had stories to tell of ravage and
destruction by the Danes, who made a
favourite resort of this Isle of Sheppey,
and had arsenals, too, and dockyards, after
their fashion, in this windy, watery nook.
And here, too, you may find the tomb of
Sir Robert de Shurland, with the horse's
head carved thereon, which commemorates
the legend of the knight who killed a
priest in a fit of not unrighteous indigna-
tion, and swam his horse far out into the
whirling tide to reach the King's ship as it
passed by, and demand the Royal pardon
for his crime. The courage of horse and
rider extorted the desired pardon, and the
noble beast brought his rider safe to land,
when an old witch met them with a curse
on her lips—the beast which had saved
the forfeited life of the knight should one
day cause his death. To falsify the curse,
the knight slew the horse on the spot; and
long after its bones lay there on the beach,
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Such are the principal observances and superstitions connected with Good Friday ; there are minor matters, but their relation is not worth the space they would occupy.

AFTER EVENSONG.

AN eventime in spring—
Chill spring before the buds were out—
A bleak east wind wailed round about
With noisy blustering ;
Beside the church the river swept
For ever on its seaward way ;
And through the long aisles dim and gray,
The twilight shadows crept.

The solemn prayers were said,
The sweet, old, simple hymns were done,
And stepping softly, one by one,
With reverential tread,
Passed out the worshippers. We stayed,
We, among others far and few,
Sat still, as loving listeners do,
To hear the organ played.

The lights burned dim and low,
And through the silence rose a strain,
So closely blent of joy and pain,
We scarcely seemed to know
The joyous from the sad ; then passed
The music to a minor key,
And through the dusk I looked at thee,
As one who looks his last.

Did for a moment meet
Thy soul and mine ? I cannot tell.
The mystic music rose and fell
In louder tones and sweet,
Till notes of triumph pealed above
The mournful minor ; then the strain
That seemed so full of human pain,
So sad with human love,

Grew deeper, more divine ;
It floated round us like a cloud,
As in the dusk with faces bowed
We lingered near the shrine ;
We heard the waves of sweetness roll
About us, near, and yet apart.
Did heart lean then to longing heart ?
Soul speak to asking soul ?

I know not, I, but this I know,
The music soothed my lonely pain,
And if my heart go out in vain
To thee—yet let it go.
Ah ! though we parted separate ways,
What time the music had an end,
And though our lives may never blend
Through length of earthly days :

I do not grudge thee, dear,
The best I have, a faithful heart,
Nor do I grudge their happy part
Who have thee ever near :
I am content to love afar
For love's sake only. I can wait
To read the riddle of my fate
Beneath some happier star !

SHEERNESS AND ITS DOCKYARD.

WHEN the stormy winds do blow, there is something of a toss and tumble about Sheerness. Even before that point is reached by one on the downward cruise, the river assumes a very sea-going aspect.

Father Thames calls for his tarpanlin and sea-boots, whereabouts opens out that dismal-looking refuge known as Thames Haven. Canvey Island is all awash with the sea ; the sturdy light-ship at the Nore dips and rises with dripping sides, and the hoys and coasting barges stagger along well buffeted by wind and waves. Yea, it is a wild and watery scene, and what land there may be, wrapped up in the driving sea mist, is not of much account. But, as you hug the Kentish shore, the dark spit of land which stretches out into the troubled waters is a pleasant sight to the fresh-water sailor, for there lies Sheerness, its forts and batteries, rising square and grim over the waters, with building sheds and storehouse beyond.

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darkening sky, and contrast with the white surf that curls over the shoal and sand-bank, and of the white sea-birds that circle overhead, and out of the smoke comes the resounding clang of hammers and the hum and thud of machinery.

It is possible that we may have seen Sheerness under quite different conditions. We may have come in an excursion boat on some fine summer holiday, with a fiddler, a harp, and a cornet on board; with dancing going on wherever there is room for a couple of people to revolve in; while nigger minstrels fill up the vacant moments with voice and banjo, and a general hilarity rules from stem to stern. Then there may be tea on the pier-head, where tables are considerably spread for those who can only enjoy the brief stay afforded by a day's excursion. And the town itself—the old town with its weather-boarded houses, and innumerable taverns, and houses of call for sailor, soldier, dock-yard man, or excursionist—is not attractive upon a hasty visit. But speaking of the town, we must not forget that Sheerness is, in fact, a cluster of little towns, which, if they have not the distinctive features of "Rochester, Chatham, and Strood," their neighbours up the river, are yet sufficiently recognised by their inhabitants as separate settlements.

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When the fortified lines were extended during the great French war, the blue houses were included within them, and Blue Town came into existence. Old plans, too, show a house standing by itself at some distance from the forts, which is called the Mile House; and covering the site we now have Mile Town. Banks Town takes its name from Sir Edward Banks, a great contractor in his day, who had the building of new London and Waterloo Bridges, and did most of the new works about Sheerness. Then there

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But in those older days, nothing had been heard of Sheerness, except the name of it, which attached to the low headland, which was sometimes almost covered by the waves. It was only in the time of Charles the First that some sort of a bulwark was run up and mounted with a few guns, on some alarm of war, to protect the

entrance to the Medway. But it was not till the Restoration that the advantages of Sheerness as a naval station were fully recognised, although it was then such a dismal, deserted place, that the pressed men, who were at work on the Ness, in 1665, in a petition for more wages, said that there was neither small-beer nor water within three miles of the place. Pepys records the beginning of the Dockyard in his Diary of eighteenth of August of that same year: "To Sheerness, where we walked up and down laying out the ground to be taken in for a yard to lay provisions for cleaning and repairing of ships, and a most proper place it is for the purpose."

In the following year Evelyn records a visit to the new works:

"I went on shore at Sheerness, where they were building an arsenal for the fleet, and designing a royal fort with a receptacle for great ships to ride at anchor; but here I beheld the sad spectacle, more than half that gallant bulwark of the kingdom"—meaning the Royal fleet—"miserably shattered, hardly a vessel entire, but appearing rather so many wrecks and hulls, so cruelly had the Dutch mangled us" in the naval battle fought not long before.

But there was worse still to come. Next year, 1667, there was no money to fit out the fleet, so much had been squandered on the King's pleasures, and wasted by his favourite Sultanas; and the Dutch fleet, riding at anchor at the Nore, closed the navigation of the Thames, and brought to a climax the national shame and degradation. A portion of the Dutch fleet sailed up the Medway, as far as Chatham, burning and destroying all the King's ships that were found in the river, as well as all Government stores and munitions of war.

The work of destruction performed, the Dutch fell back down the river to Sheerness. Here there was some attempt at resistance. Earlier in the year the King himself, and the Duke of York, his brother, had personally superintended the laying out of the fortifications. But little had been done; the parapets of the fort were insufficient to protect the gunners; while the fire from the ships was heavy and well sustained.

Pepys, waiting at Gravesend for news, heard the guns playing upon the works, and on the following day, June the eleventh, records:

"Sheerness lost last night, after two or three hours' dispute."

A Dutch print of the period exhibits in graphic form the disasters of England, and

the triumph of the Dutch. In the upper part is exhibited a bird's-eye view of the Medway, with the square keep of Rochester Castle, and the Cathedral in the foreground, while behind, the Bergh of Rainham rises in mountainous fashion more imposing than nature. Below are woods and villages, and the river winding in many folds, with the smoke of burning ships rising from every creek and haven. The other section of the print is concerned with the capture of Sheerness. Boats and barges have landed the attacking force on the island, wounded men are lying here and there, while some gallant Mynheer leads on a column of his musketeers in cloaks and broad-brimmed hats. The dockyard stores, enclosed within a rude stockade, are going up in flame and smoke, and Sheerness is rendered to the victors in the midst of fire, and smoke, and alarums of artillery.

The Dutch, however, soon drew off, and the work of reconstruction commenced—in a leisurely fashion, however, for in 1672 Evelyn mentions the port as newly finished. But as the ensuing revolution of 1688 converted the Dutch from foes to friends, allies, and almost brothers, the paramount importance of Sheerness as a naval station ceased for a time, and the fortifications fell into neglect, although, as a dockyard, Sheerness took its share in the work of shipbuilding for the Royal Navy. But in 1778, during the American War, when both France and Spain had declared war against us, and an allied fleet dominated the Channel and threatened the southern coasts, the defences of the Thames were found to be in a lamentable condition. The forts of Sheerness were mere dummies; the parapets a few bricks thick, and rather a danger than a defence to those serving behind them, while other defensive works were equally neglected. And yet, as the engineer reports, "the safety of this place is certainly of the utmost consequence, as the safety of two capital dockyards must, in a great measure, depend on it," a sentence as applicable now as then, with, it might be added, the safety of a capital city known as London.

When, in 1797, the mutiny at the Nore broke out, and Sheerness was surrounded by what might be almost considered as a hostile fleet, the revolted sailors would have found little difficulty in taking possession of the town and forts. But the mutineers, to do them justice, had no unpatriotic designs; they only demanded the

redress of grievances; and, indeed, the mutiny might be more fitly termed a strike, with the disastrous result that the leader, Parker, with four or five others, were hanged at the yard-arm within sight of the bastions of Sheerness, sacrificed rather to save the credit of the Admiralty, than in the interests of justice.

It was during the ensuing wars with the great Napoleon, that the Dockyard assumed its present proportions, and was surrounded by the enormous brick wall, still existing, which cost, it is said, forty thousand pounds, while the docks and basins were excavated at the cost of some three millions. Since then, while our war vessels have grown to such huge proportions, the docks of Sheerness have not been correspondingly enlarged, so that the yard is no longer employed in building great battle-ships, but is kept at work upon vessels of a less powerful class.

A visit to the Dockyard brings us at once into contact with our familiar friends, the Metropolitan Police. The A division shows in great force at the dock-gates, keeping a keen eye upon everything that goes in or comes out, the latter especially, and generally manifesting themselves in a good-humoured way as completely the masters of the situation. Once within the compass of the monumental brick wall, the first impression is of a roomy, rather rural compound, with terraces of small, but neat houses, with gardens and flower-beds, and lawn-tennis for the young people of the upper Dockyard establishment. There is a big house, too, which is the residence of the Captain-Superintendent, a naval officer, with gardens, and a field for the pony and domestic fowls to run about in—all very pleasant and home-like.

Then there are building sheds where armed cruisers are in course of construction, where hammers are ringing out rough music among bolts and trenails, and workmen swarm about the gaunt ribs of ships that are soon to plough the distant main. Not the great war-ships of the future, but a composite class that critics say are not strong enough to fight or swift enough to run away. But they will have their uses, doubtless, in time of peace. There is the "Basiliak," a screw sloop which is meant to sail as well as steam, and is just ready for launching, and the "Barracouta," a screw cruiser for six guns, with a gunboat of the ornithological series, which are named after pretty, soft-billed birds, such as the sparrow, the thrush, and the goldfinch.

But a chief feature of the Dockyard is the Steam Factory for the repair of ships' engines and other general work. Here the machinery is of the best and most modern type. Powerful drills scoop out blocks of steel, cutting-machines slice up iron bars like carrots, and great Nasmyth hammers are at work, dealing now a tremendous blow that shakes the earth, or descending softly with a touch that would hardly chip an egg. Furnaces glow and forges are at work, while drums and endless bands revolve overhead, and machinery clanks and rattles everywhere.

A dry dock next claims notice, where, perhaps, the old "Hydra" is getting a coat of paint or anti-fouling composition, the "Hydra" which is the guardian dragon of the Medway with her revolving turrets and heavy guns. Grim and gruesome are the dungeon-like passages which lead to the fighting part of the ship. The iron walls that close in upon you give a feeling of suffocation, and the enormous breech-ends of the big guns are not reassuring objects. A tap opened here, a lever handled there, and the huge iron shell revolves with its enormous load, in which the human occupants are of no more account than so many flies. Then there is the wheel-room, from which the ship is steered while in action; for ordinary navigation there is a much more cheerful platform high above the turrets. She is of an old-fashioned model, no doubt, this double-headed Hydra; but she would prove a tough customer to any ordinary foe.

Suggestions of old times are some of the other features of the Dockyard—of the leisurely construction of old-fashioned frigates and three-deckers, such as those that thundered under Nelson at the Nile or in Trafalgar Bay, or that won a tardy revenge from the Dutchmen at Camperdown. There is the chip-house, for instance, whose name is a quiet joke of those ancient days, for its contents are planks and balks of timber of the most massive type; and the mast-house, where masts and spars are kept, some belonging to old ships that have been stripped, with a few of the enormous trunks that once did duty in our line-of-battle ships.

Adjoining the Dockyard, but not otherwise connected with it, are the Naval Barracks, the first of the kind in the kingdom, where Jack, when his ship is paid off, is lodged till he is drafted into another craft. At times there may be some two thousand sailors within its walls; at

the "brother," like whom there is no other, is both great and good.

But I must finish the record of that day when Bobby thought he heard his dear soldiers coming, and was so glad—and then so sorry.

NAPLES IN PANORAMA.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE vast sweep of the shore of Naples, and its adjacent and dependent cities and villages, from Pozzuoli to Castellamare, offers one of the most varied and animated spectacles in the world. Splendour and misery stand forth in strong relief under the brilliant light falling from the crystal vaults of the cloudless sky; life is buoyant, reckless, abundant. The ragged youth, who is plodding beside a patient ass, is singing at the top of his melodious voice, and with no little artistic effect; he dwells upon the last syllable of each line of the song, as if it were something precious with which he is loth to have done. The still more ragged vendor of vegetables throws a certain harmony into his appeal for patronage. The women darting in and out of the doorways, which open into the dark, cool habitations, alternately shout and sing; even the sedate priest, turning aside from the public park to climb the Ascension di Chiaja, towards his church, is gently murmuring some little refrain. Every one pitches the voice high, and unless the stranger does the same, although he may speak unexceptionable Italian, he will be asked to repeat what he has said.

It is but a few years since the now elegant and majestic Chiaja, fringed with palatial hotels, and banks, and mansions, was a mere strand, the principal objects of interest upon which were the huge and gloomy mass of the Castel l'Uovo—a kind of Château d'If, at present used as a military prison—and a few other picturesque edifices perched on the cliffs. The barefooted fishermen still drag their nets from the Chiaja as they did before the improvements; no one appears to offer the slightest objection. They form a pretty spectacle, toiling at the drag-ropes, and rowing back and forth, especially at sunset, when the sea and sky are magnificent with dazzling colours. Primitive, indeed, is the costume of these men. Patriarchs of sixty or seventy may be seen paddling about, arrayed in cotton shirt and trousers,

which come only to the knee, and with the drooping woollen cap, which is a relic of the Spanish domination. In winter and summer they are barefooted; and not even the sudden cold winds of January and February can tempt them to expend any portion of their slender savings in shoes and stockings. All these men, even the very oldest and seemingly most wretched, sing. Sometimes the song is the exhalation of a complaint, a protest against the hardness and weariness of life; but not often. For just as the burden of life begins to seem intolerable, Nature assumes one of her most bewitching aspects, and transfigures every common and mean object, filling existence with new variety and beauty. In winter, as in summer, there is a peculiar quality in Naples sunshine which may be characterised as enchanting.

Santa Lucia is one of the most attractive sections of the great Naples panorama. Here stand in respectful rows the sellers of oysters, crabs, lobsters, and "sea-fruit," which is not half bad when once one has found courage to taste it. Along the slopes of the hill are the imposing offices of the naval administration; at every step a noble view of the harbour and the guardian mountains beyond is to be obtained. Across the blue water to the right rises purple Capri, with the Somentine peninsula near it on the left. Still further to the left is Castellamare, with its busy docks and wharves, and then the multitude of towns, large and small, on the Vesuvian slope, and the volcanic monarch himself, with his crown of smoke by day and of fire by night. From a point a little to the right of the Royal Palace the whole harbour may be overlooked. In a perfect day the sky, the sea, and the mountains seem to melt into an opal and blue, out of which peep the graceful lines of spars and rigging of the huge men-of-war, of which there are always two or three in anchorage at Naples, and of the merchant steamers which ply to Messina, Egypt, the Indies, and Australia, Belgium, Holland, England, and the two Americas. There are not so many small craft, little white-winged sea-birds, skimming hither and yon, as would be seen in an English or American port; but, on the other hand, there are multitudes of small row-boats, in which the waterman disports himself after the fashion of his kind, and, while he labours, alternately swears and sings.

Leaving Santa Lucia, and passing

through the great square, with the Royal Palace and the Theatre of San Carlo on the right, we approach the Government port and the essentially maritime quarter. And here, from the great square of the Municipio, all the way around to Castellamare, the population swarms. What shoals, what flocks, what masses of humanity! all belonging to the humble and uneducated classes. The involuntary and first question which rises to the stranger's lips is: "Where do all these throngs get enough to eat?" And he can answer it for himself simply enough—they do not get enough to eat.

A few hours before sitting down to write this paper, I read in the leading evening journal of Naples that six deaths from hunger were registered last week in one town in Sicily, under circumstances which left no doubt as to the truth of the statement of the cause of decease. But let us not dwell on this sad topic. For the moment let us contemplate, without too deeply penetrating into their distresses, the masses that fill the wide streets, the quays, and the side-avenues; that cluster on the many balconies of the enormously tall houses, and sit in the doorways, and hang on the edges of the monuments. Here the mariner abounds; here are mysterious old men with that cosmopolitanism born of long voyages, walking up and down the side-pavements as if promenading the decks of their ships. One has a boat, another is a cicerone, a third is a tempter to the unwary, a fourth tends a market-stall. These sea-dogs all bask in the sun, and criticise "Tramontano" and "Sirocco," and the effect of those winds on navigation, as well as on the human cuticle.

From the Government docks come pouring out five or six hundred handsome sailors, neatly arrayed, and every one with a half-penny, which he proceeds to invest in a very black and very ugly cigar. Officials, in naval caps and astonishingly blue cloaks, stalk up and down; horses, and mules, and cattle struggle and tremble together as they slip and fall on the steaming pavements, and sometimes half-a-dozen of them go down together, with a driver or two under them. In and out of the numerous steamship offices hurry emigrants from every country of Europe.

Beyond the region of that office is a quarter filled with small shops, and here people are so thick that they almost resent the presence of a stranger. The sail-maker,

seated on a bench made from the trunk of a tree, is chatting with his neighbour, who is fashioning an oar. A little way off, with both his feet luxuriously bathing in a pool of liquid mud, is a fruit-seller, with oranges, lemons, nuts, dates, and figs piled high before him.

In the adjacent market—in the centre of which stands a rich monument erected to Philip the Third, Catholic King—at least five thousand people are gathered. Huge awnings rise above the stalls as protection from the sun. The whole scene blazes with colour; the light is riotous; the walls seem hot with it. Although we are in winter, the flies swarm as in the North in summer.

But the people, closely inspected, look pale, and thin, and worn, especially the women, who drag themselves about listlessly, and seem profoundly weary. No one seems to have any privacy or seclusion, or to want them. In the vast courtyards of the houses people are clamouring at each other all day long, in the open stairways, on the landings. Every one knows what every one else has to eat; and, when the tax-collector calls, what skeleton there may be in the closet.

The women are perpetually holding little assizes at the main entrances, and trying such of their neighbours as they do not like. It is not wonderful that the knife flashes now and then. Most of the disputes which end with the arbitrament of the knife, are not about love or politics, but about money. The punishments are severe; but they do not succeed at all in preventing the quarrels or in restricting their number. The authorities have, in recent years, endeavoured to prevent the carrying of revolvers and knives, but in vain.

The desire to use a weapon, even in a dispute over a trivial matter, seems universal in the lower classes. Passing through a little square on the way to the Via Amedeo one evening, I saw two half-grown boys engaged in an altercation which had arisen over some disagreement in their sports. Boy number one first pushed boy number two, who returned the push with interest. Boy number one then struck boy number two, who returned the blow, and added another. Boy number one then used insulting language to boy number two, whereupon boy number two put his hand in his pocket, and withdrew it armed with a large knife, which he proceeded deliberately to open. At this

juncture, the neighbouring barber interfered, and threatened both boys with the police; but when I left, boy number two still held his knife open and was anxious for a further encounter.

The vendetta still exists in all its primitive vigour in the Neapolitan provinces. The magistrates allege that one of the reasons for the long term of preventive imprisonment to which persons, even accused of homicide, are subjected, is to protect the said persons from injury, and to let the anger of the two parties to the suit die away. "Otherwise, one half of the people of Naples would kill the other half," they say.

Naples annually stretches out farther and farther towards Vesuvius, and acres of tall and rather ugly houses may now be seen on the vast plains, where, a few years ago, appeared only the cabins of the peasantry. These cabins, or stone huts, in which the peasants, who have much rude comfort, are content to live, are exceedingly simple in construction. They consist of four strong and thick stone walls, pierced at front and back by wide entrances, and covered with a vaulted roof made out of a species of concrete. There are no windows, and it is to be presumed that the cabins are, therefore, hermetically closed at night. The furniture, with one exception, is rude, and that exception is the bed, which is massive, and covered with spotless linen and blankets. How the men and women, whom one sees covered with dirt in the fields near these cabins, manage to keep their beds so clean, is a mystery. No work is done in the house, unless the occupant happens to be a weaver; the cooking, the toilette, the hundred occupations of the household, are all performed out of doors. The macaroni-maker hangs his pastes on long poles in front of his dwelling; the dogs, fowls, goats, and cats, run in and out of the shops of the village tailor, shoemaker, and wine-merchant; the naked children roll in the mud in winter, and in the dust in summer; and the flashing sun pours its beneficent light on all this humble life, relieving it of the intense misery which it would possess amid the fogs and smoke of Northern Europe.

On the high slopes above the nearer portion of the city in the Vesuvian plain, is the cemetery, or, rather, the line of cemeteries, where repose the poor and rich of Naples who have "gone over to the majority." The newest and most important one is very beautiful, with its

great groves of cypresses looming up against the exquisite blue of the sky, and with its marble and stone temples showing their majestic proportions through the lines of trees. The route to this new cemetery lies along a hilly road which commands a view of the whole vast amphitheatre of Naples Bay, and the city stretching away beneath Santa Lucia's hill, with domes and towers innumerable, down to the blue water. The entrance to the city of the dead is through a Campo Santo, rather inartistically planted with evergreens and flowering plants, in the centre of which rises the colossal marble group of statues erected by Ferdinand the Second, representing an angel upholding the cross and surrounded by kneeling figures of other angels. From this Campo Santo, broad flights of steps at left and right lead down to the streets of tombs. There are but few graves, in the ordinary sense of the term; but there are hundreds of memorial shrines, each one provided with a vault, in which repose various members of one family. The "Confraternities," churches, societies, all have their tombs, some of which are very imposing structures. The inscriptions are generally models of modesty and good taste, and the sculptures are exquisite. Some of the temples are Roman, others Greek; others, again, Egyptian in form; but there is no incongruity in the grouping. Evergreens are everywhere. There are few banks of flowers and grass, and few crosses. The portrait busts in marble, so familiar a fixture in Italian cemeteries, are seemingly countless. From a hundred points in this charmingly situated cemetery, grand views of Vesuvius and its neighbour mountains, and of the hundreds of acres of vineyard and garden, can be obtained. "Per se e per i Suoi," is a favourite inscription on many tombs, erected at the height of their careers by wealthy and distinguished natives of Naples. They like to climb up, from time to time, out of the clamour and heat of the great Southern city, to the breezy hillside, where their mortal remains are to find their final resting-place. Great provision has been made in recent years by the municipality of Naples for the decent interment of the poor; and the horrible mockery and desecration of the common ditches is gradually coming to an end.

Funerals, however—except those in which military honours are rendered—still have a repulsively-grotesque character. The body of the deceased is not accom-

panied, as in France, by a long and sympathetic train of friends and associates, but is committed to the care of a confraternity, the members of which are masked in hideous mediæval hats and gowns, with hoods adapted to the face, so that the eyes alone are visible; and these lugubrious maskers are followed by a few old men—professional mourners—in glazed hats, and shabby blue cloaks, the effect of the whole being at first sight almost repulsive.

When I first arrived in Naples, I looked about me curiously for the public reciter or reader from the poems of Tasso and Ariosto, who was once a prominent figure in the market-places and principal squares, but I could not find him; and I think the tramways have driven him into the limbo of lost professions. I found, however, that many Neapolitans possess the faculty of repeating, in extenso, volumes which they have read, and of doing it with marked grace and eloquence. Thus, I once heard a youth, who certainly possessed only an ordinary education, tell the story of the "Promessi Sposi" to a company of a dozen persons with such skill, that it was unalloyed pleasure to listen to him, not the least interesting part of the entertainment being his abundant and appropriate gestures.

The Neapolitans of the middle and lower classes possess extraordinary power for dramatising the most ordinary occurrences, and for magnifying them into something wonderful. The marvellous delights them; they all possess a smattering of notions about external affairs; and their versions of the Garibaldian epoch, and of the liberation of Naples from the oppressor, while full of errors and grotesque mistakes, are vastly entertaining.

The public writer is to be seen in all convenient corners—under the porches of the San Carlo, in the markets, and the parks; and the laughing and blushing maidens pour their confidences into his willing ear, exactly as in Madrid and Seville.

MAUNDY THURSDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY.

MAUNDY THURSDAY is the day immediately preceding Good Friday. It was also known as Shere Thursday, probably from a custom of the priests, who on this day are said to have shaved themselves and trimmed their hair, which had

been allowed to grow during the preceding six weeks. An old chronicle says "people would this day shere theyr hedes, and clypp theyr berdes, and so make them honest against Easter Day." It is supposed that Maundy Thursday was the day on which Christ delivered His mandate that we should love one another, Maundy being a corruption of mandate. It is also attributed to Maund—a hand-basket in which the King was accustomed to give alms to the poor. The word Maundy is used by some old authors to denote gifts. Other derivations are given, and Nares says in his "Glossary" that "Dunton, in his 'British Appolo,' conceives Maunday to be corrupted from the mandate of Christ to His disciples, to break bread in remembrance of Him, or from His other mandate after He had washed their feet, to love one another." With better reason it is thought to be derived from the Saxon word "mand," which afterwards became "maund," a name for a basket, and subsequently for any gift or offering contained in the basket. Thus, Shakespeare says, "a thousand favours from her maund she drew;" and Herrick says—

Behold for us the naked graces stay,
With Maunds of roses for to strew the way.

On this day, in the early part of our history, the Sovereigns of England, or their almoners, were accustomed to give alms, food, and clothing to as many poor persons as they were years old; a custom continued down to the present day. It is of very great antiquity, for Saint Augustine speaks of it in the year 400 A.D. At that time it included the washing of the feet of those who received alms. The earliest definite record we find of the practice is in 1363, when Edward the Third had attained his sixtieth year, and alms, food, and clothing were given to sixty poor persons.

Queen Elizabeth, when thirty-nine years of age, attended by thirty-nine ladies, performed the ceremony at Greenwich, when thirty-nine poor women had their feet dipped in basins of water and dried by their Sovereign, who knelt before them on a cushion, afterwards marking the foot with the sign of the Cross and reverently kissing it. The chronicler adds, that the feet of the women had been previously washed, by the yeomen of the laundry, with warm water and sweet herbs. Afterwards gifts of three kinds—money, broad-cloth for clothes, woollen stockings, and baskets of provisions—were distributed.

man. "I, on the contrary, have had little but good fortune since leaving Graybourne. Sometimes, indeed, looking back on those days, I can hardly believe that it is not all a dream."

"I congratulate you most sincerely, Miss Delapierre," he said, turning his handsome, well-remembered eyes upon her with none of the indifference he had shown at Graybourne. "Although I have lived abroad, reports of your fame have reached me, although I never thought that you were identical with Bessie Peters of Graybourne days."

"I hope you won't think, because I have changed my name, that I am ashamed of it," she put in quickly. "I would not be such a snob as that; and if my time were to come over again, I should still be Bessie Peters. But when I first went on the stage I was very young and inexperienced, and I allowed myself to be overruled by those who declared I should have a much better chance of success if I adopted a foreign name. And now, of course, I must keep it."

"Je n'en vois pas la nécessité," said Maurice, smiling at her earnestness. "I am sure you need not keep it a day longer than you feel inclined. If you are still Miss Delapierre, it cannot be because you have not had ample opportunities of becoming something else. But it is quite natural that you should be very hard to please."

The idle compliment would have been distasteful from anybody else; but coming from him, the distant and unapproachable young god of old days, it made her heart leap wildly. Oh, sweetest moment, when the man she had adored so long and so hopelessly told her, with every appearance of sincerity, that she did quite right in being hard to please in her choice of a husband!

"It is getting very late, and the people are going fast," she observed, gravely. "Will you see me to my carriage, Mr. Carrington?"

And when he had put her into her brougham, she preferred a last request:

"You will come and see me?" It is so pleasant to talk to anybody who knows Graybourne. Mrs. Melhuish, the lady with whom I reside, is always at home on Thursday afternoons. Say you will come."

The proud Miss Delapierre would hardly have been recognised again in the woman who pleaded so softly and so sweetly for

such a trifling boon. He promised after a moment's hesitation; and she sank back on her cushions, so utterly happy that she would not have changed places with any woman on earth.

"My darling! oh, my darling!" she murmured over and over again in the darkness, "I am glad I am beautiful and famous, because it makes me more worthy of you! And I have told you all my story. I recited that bit of Tennyson only for you; and yet you didn't guess it. Never mind, I will tell you some day!"

The thoughts of Maurice were of a less romantic cast as he walked home to his rooms, which were not far off. Although practically a ruined man—"stone broke," to use the graceful idiom of the day—it never entered his head that he could reside in any other quarter of London than Mayfair. He must have luxurious rooms and skilled attendance, albeit the Bankruptcy Court loomed big on his horizon.

He had come back to England to collect the remnants of his property, wasted by years of devotion to Continental gaming-tables; and also in the hope that some of his many influential relations and friends might be able to help him to some desirable and lucrative post. He hated work; but the prospect of a certain income would be better than being eternally the prey of debt and duns.

"Fancy little Bessie Peters, the miller's niece, a guest of Lady Caroline's, and run after by Dukes and Duchesses!" he mused as he lighted another cigarette. "I can just remember her at the ball—a slim girl in a white frock, who blushed whenever I spoke to her. I suppose I had better go and see her. It appears that actors and actresses are accorded 'le haut du pavé' now, though it wasn't so when I left England. She must know a lot of people, and it's possible she might help me to something."

It was not very long before he made his way to her house, where he found the actress and her duenna dispensing tea and cake to an assemblage of literary and artistic celebrities. The tone of the gathering was decorous almost to dullness, and the subdued tints of the room were a further revelation of Miss Delapierre's character. In his younger days, Maurice had visited at the houses of other actresses; but, albeit these ladies were famous in their own line, it was a line very different from this.

She looked very handsome as she

greeted him with a smile and a flush of colour in the cheeks which still defied the ravages of stage cosmetics. If he had only known how tumultuously her heart was beating as she calmly told him she was glad to see him, and asked if he would like some tea! It was like a delicious dream to be entertaining Maurice in her own house at last!

But there were many others with claims upon her attention, and she could not devote herself to the one guest she most esteemed. When the people were beginning to go, however, he skilfully seized the opportunity to secure a vacant seat at her side.

"Let me give you another cup of tea," she said, eager to do him even that small kindness in default of a better.

"Thanks, I've almost got out of the way of drinking tea. One does abroad, you know, where the decoction is so execrable."

"You have been abroad a long time?"

"Six years. It's a good slice out of a man's lifetime. And now that I am in England again, I don't think I shall stay. This is not a poor man's country, Miss Delapierre. I've had an offer to go and help an old schoolfellow, who's planting tea in Ceylon, and I think I shall accept it."

"Ceylon! That is a long way off."

"A very long way," he assented, moodily. "And slow enough when you get there, with no society, and no towns near. I hope you patronise our colonies in the way of tea, Miss Delapierre, and when you drink it, think sometimes how many of your expatriated countrymen are at present occupied in growing it for you."

"Couldn't you get anything to do nearer than Ceylon?"

"It seems not. I've been trying; but nobody appears to require my assistance in any department of life. Secretaryships, and all that kind of thing, are overdone. And now to come to a pleasanter topic. I went to your theatre the other night, and was simply charmed! It was certainly a most brilliant performance, even for you, to judge from the comments of people sitting near."

"A most brilliant performance!" Her heart was beating madly, for that night she had acted solely for him—to him. She had stepped on the stage somewhat worn-out and spiritless, as all actresses, being only mortal, must at times; but the sight of him, sitting in the stalls, had

acted like magic upon her nerves, and she had never played better in her life—and she knew it. She only hoped she did not look too foolishly happy at his praise; but it was certainly one of the happiest moments in her life.

"I am glad you liked it," she said, quietly. "Pray come to the theatre whenever you like. As an old Graybourne acquaintance, I shall be pleased to welcome you. Have you any engagement for Saturday? I am going to give a *matinée*, and play *Lady Teazle* for the first time in London."

"Delightful! I'll be sure and come," said Maurice, getting up to go. "In old comedy you ought to be irresistible. I must confess I thought the piece I saw you in the other night poor and thin when you were off the stage."

"Must you go!" said Bessie, desperately, unwilling to trust him out of her sight. "Well, come some evening before long and dine with us and go to the theatre. And on Saturday remember you are pledged to be there."

Maurice was not slow to avail himself of her hospitality; and for the rest of the season the two were thrown much into each other's company. Bessie made no attempt to evade her fate; but regulated all her movements according to his—going where she knew she would meet him; riding with him in the Row, and inviting him to all entertainments at her house. He found it pleasant enough to be the chosen escort of one of the most brilliant women in London.

But all these things cost money, and Maurice found himself sinking deeper and deeper in debt. He played, too, when by some miracle he happened to be in possession of a little cash. And he found the lucrative appointment, which he craved, more distant than ever.

"It will have to be Ceylon, after all!" he said gloomily one day, in the hearing of Miss Delapierre.

For all her self-control she paled a little.

"I thought you had quite abandoned that project."

"No; only laid it aside. My friend gave me three months to think it over, and, by Jove! I think I'll go while I have the chance. It will be a living, at any rate."

Two days after he received a delicately-worded epistle from the great actress, which effectually changed the current of his thoughts. Her friend, Mr. Borrowdale,

the celebrated actor and manager of the Pearl Theatre, was in need of a cultivated gentleman to act as his private secretary and advise him upon various points; and, if Mr. Carrington did not think such a post beneath him, she would speak to Mr. Borrowdale on his behalf. The salary—which she mentioned—struck Maurice as being very high. He did not know that Miss Delapierre had petitioned Mr. Borrowdale, who was a hard-fisted North-countryman, to be allowed to double the usual amount, on the plea that Mr. Carrington was an old Graybourne acquaintance, to whose family—as she put it—she owed much, and wished to do a kindness.

Maurice, who had all a lazy, pleasure-loving man's detestation of new faces and new countries, readily accepted the offer. He found his duties very light, and with moderate care the salary should have been ample; but money never would remain in his pockets, and he was often at his wife's end what to do. Being pressed by an irate tradesman for the payment of an account, he allowed himself to be betrayed into a warmth which led to a summons before a magistrate, and divers witty paragraphs under such titles as "The Gentleman and his Bootmaker," in the papers. He himself cared little about having his impecuniosity thus published to the world; but to Elizabeth Delapierre it seemed shocking that such humiliations should occur to the man she loved. Without saying anything to Maurice, she went to her solicitor and requested him to find and pay, in secret, the most pressing of Maurice Carrington's creditors, so that he should be spared the annoyance of continual duns. The man of business remonstrated, saying that Mr. Carrington's extravagant habits were the chief cause of his difficulties; but Bessie was firm. The inroads thus made upon her capital were considerable, but she did not grudge the outlay.

She would have spent ten times as much for the privilege of keeping him at her side. Life without Maurice would be simply unendurable. She only lived in his presence; although she could not help wondering sometimes whether he felt as much pleasure in her company as she did in his. Sometimes he seemed quite indifferent; at others he would be so earnest, so lover-like, that her heart beat high with hope.

Sometimes she feared that she must have betrayed her secret to him; for no other man had ever received such favours at her

hands as Maurice Carrington. But she omitted to make allowance for the receptiveness of his nature. He was a man accustomed to feminine adoration, and able to swallow a great deal of it without the least suspicion. He liked to be waited upon by pretty women; it quite accorded with his notions of the fitness of things.

Once, however, they came perilously near to a disclosure, when Bessie was in a more melting mood than usual, and so weary of the present state of indecision, that she felt half-inclined to cut the Gordian knot by boldly telling Maurice all her story. One night, after a gathering at her house, at which she had given some recitations to her guests, he began to speak of the first time he heard her recite at Lady Caroline's.

"You surpassed yourself that night; that bit of Tennyson was simply charming. Why have you never recited it since? I liked it better than anything you did to-night. It was about a poor girl caring for a fellow above her in the social scale. Let me see—how does it go?"

"He passed; a soul of nobler tone:
My spirit loved and loves him yet,
Like some poor girl whose heart is set
On one whose rank exceeds her own."

murmured Bessie. "Do you know, Mr. Carrington, that was my own history."

"Yours?" he repeated, in astonishment.

"Yes." She felt that she was growing utterly reckless. "Years ago, at Graybourne, when I was a mere child, I—I cared very much for a man of higher position, and it was that which induced me to try and improve myself, and raise myself nearer to his level——"

"Why, this is quite a romance. And do you know, oddly enough, I never credited you with being a romantic person, Miss Delapierre. I don't know why, unless it is because you always seem to have a good reason for all you do. But you have outlived that early infatuation by this time, doubtless?"

"I shall never outlive it. My feelings have not changed." She looked at him, sitting there in easy unconsciousness, and a mad impulse came over her to throw herself on her knees before him, and cry: "Maurice, you are the idol of my youth, and I owe everything to you!" She was actually coming nearer, and the words were trembling on her lips, when the door opened, and Mrs. Melhuish entered.

"Bessie, dear," she said, tranquilly,

peering about the room with her short-sighted eyes, "have you seen my glasses anywhere?"

After that, of course, romance was at an end for the evening; and as Bessie did not see Maurice for several days afterwards, her resolution had time to cool. She was glad she had not spoken. She wanted him to know, oh! very, very much! but, at the same time, it seemed to her more fitting that the knowledge should come to him some other way.

"Did you know that the Duke of Barminster is going to be married?" he asked, abruptly, one morning when he came in and found her very busy writing letters. He was accustomed to come to the house at all hours. The Duke of Barminster was the nobleman to whom allusion has already been made as the unsuccessful suitor of Miss Delapierre.

"Yea," she answered, quietly, "to Lady Violet Sandford. I am very glad," she added, as though to put the question of her feelings in the matter beyond dispute.

"Well, if you are pleased, I suppose there's nobody with a greater right to say so," he answered, rather gloomily. "But still it seems rather a pity—if you'll excuse my saying so. The title of Duchess would have suited you admirably, Miss Delapierre."

"I trust I should have done nothing to disgrace it," she answered, with quiet dignity. "But, in declining it, I acted according to the dictates of my conscience; and I have never regretted it."

"Still, I think it was a pity. The Duke's a good fellow, and would have made a kind husband. Besides, if you had married him, think how much influence you might have had; what good you could have done; how many deserving people you might have helped——"

He broke off abruptly, not quite liking to add—"how you might have assisted me to push my fortunes," which was the real thought in his mind. He had often reflected how useful Bessie might have been to him if she had not been blind to her own interests. A beautiful young Duchess would have been able to compass many things which an actress could not. Her influence could easily have procured him some Colonial governorship or desirable diplomatic mission.

"I could never marry for mere position alone, Mr. Carrington. That would have been fair neither to the Duke nor to myself."

"Ab, I forgot!" he answered, rather sarcastically. "You are still cherishing that romantic attachment to some unknown hero you told me of the other day—the man you fell in love with when you were only fifteen—wasn't it?—and have never forgotten since. Of course, you ought to know your own business best; but it looks rather as if you had thrown away the substance for the shadow."

His cynical tone jarred upon her strangely—it was not like Maurice.

"I don't think you can quite judge for me in this matter, Mr. Carrington. I am very glad that the Duke is going to marry Lady Violet. She is a charming girl, and I wish him every happiness."

Clearly, there was nothing more to be said. If Maurice had come with a half-formed intention of endeavouring to bring Miss Delapierre to the sense of her own folly, and induce her to try and win back the Duke before it was too late, he was obliged to relinquish it. He chatted about other things for a few minutes, and then went his way.

But Bessie wrote no more letters that morning. For a long time she sat leaning her head on her hand, trying to reconcile the Maurice who would have had her marry a man she did not love, for the sake of his position, with the Maurice of her dreams. She had never yet been able to see him as he really was. To her indulgent eyes he was still the radiant, dazzling vision he had been that first day in the lane; still her youthful hero, with no taint of the earth about him. He could not easily be shaken on his pedestal, or she would certainly have thought it odd that he should speak as he had spoken that morning, if he had really had a particle of affection for her. There was a strangely innocent unworldliness in Bessie, despite her stage training, which rendered her an easy dupe where her feelings were concerned; and soon she was willing to persuade herself that Maurice had only given her another proof of his unselfishness. He wished her to marry the Duke because he himself was a poor man, too noble to drag the woman he loved into poverty.

"But why does he not ask me? Have I not money enough for both?" she impatiently thought. And then she looked rather grave at the reflection that, after all, she was not so very rich. Her expenditure was necessarily large; and the debts she

had paid for Maurice, without his knowledge, were considerable. Latterly, also, she had once or twice advanced him money. He made no secret of the desperate state of his finances; and though he had never asked her in so many words for a loan, yet, when she had offered it to him, he had allowed her persuasions to overcome his scruples and induce him to accept it.

The impression their last interview left on her mind was all the deeper because he did nothing to efface it. Days passed, and he did not come. Mrs. Melhuish wondered why not, and imagined he must be ill.

At last Bessie sat down and wrote to him, playfully reproaching him for his absence, and requesting him, if not previously engaged, to come and dine with them the next evening.

The next morning she looked eagerly among her batch of letters for Maurice's well-known handwriting; and eagerly swooped upon one he had addressed to Miss Delapierre. It struck her as a trifle odd, when she opened it, to find that it began "My dear Adela;" but Adela happened to be the name of the heroine she was playing at the theatre, and she thought it possible that he might have given her her stage designation for a joke. She had read the first page before it began to dawn upon her that it was not intended for her at all, but for Maurice's sister, Mrs. Sebright, whose name she knew was also Adela. She would not have been a woman if she had not read to the end, when the words "Miss Delapierre" caught her eye. She saw that Maurice had evidently slipped it into the wrong envelope by mistake.

"MY DEAR ADELA,—I am awfully sorry I haven't been to see you lately; but I've been so busy that I've not had time. Soon I hope to be my own master, and then I can do as I like. But I've made good use of my time, as you'll say, when I tell you my news.

"First, though, let me ask what put the absurd notion, that I am going to marry the actress, Miss Delapierre, into your head? I assure you I never had any such intention. I own I have cultivated her society; but it was because I saw she might be useful to me, and so she has, in many ways. It was she who got me my present post. But there has never been

any real feeling on my side, although I believe she takes a kind of sentimental interest in me, on account of having known me, years ago, at Graybourne. Her uncle was old Peters, at the mill.

"But I should never care to marry an actress; and, besides, Miss Delapierre is not rich enough for me. I know her financial position thoroughly. And this brings me to my news. I am engaged to Mrs. Rosenheim, the widow of old Rosenheim the Viennese banker; and we're to be married in three months. It was only settled yesterday, and you may tell all your friends. She is fat, I grant, and she'll never see forty again; but I've outlived romance, and she has half-a-million of money. Only think of that!

"So, if you should hear any more of the nonsense about Miss Delapierre, please contradict it, as the report might get round to Matilda's ears—her name is Matilda—and cause some unpleasantness.

"Your affectionate brother,
"MAURICE CARRINGTON."

"It was the saddest thing I ever heard," remarked our old friend the Roman-nosed dowager, to a select coterie of her cronies, next day. "Everybody noticed when Miss Delapierre came on the stage last night, that she looked very odd and unlike herself. Instead of beginning her part, she went and stood near the footlights, looking down at the audience with a smile which people who saw it tell me was enough to make your flesh creep. 'Let me give you a little bit of Tennyson—a little bit of Tennyson,' she kept repeating, until, suddenly, she put her hand to her head, with an awful scream, 'I've forgotten the words! I've forgotten the words! Oh, for the love of heaven, tell me the words!' By that time they had the sense to ring the curtain down, and she was taken home; but they say there's very little hope that she'll ever recover her senses again. She does nothing but implore everybody to 'tell her the words.'"

"Poor thing! What little bit of Tennyson was it?" enquired a sympathising matron.

"I don't know," said the Roman-nosed dowager. She had quite forgotten that evening at Lady Caroline's. As a rule, people only have very short memories in Mayfair.

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By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER IV. BALM IN GILEAD.

BEFORE we left Mrs. Mogeridge, Bobby was fairly comforted. A sob now and then shook his pinafore, but, having explained away late events to his satisfaction, Bobby searched for the three-legged stool, set it right end uppermost and himself on the top of it, and surveyed us all calmly.

"Mammy had been c'ying and c'ying because it wasn't Bobby's own pretty solgers; and Bobby had been c'ying and c'ying too. . . ."

So far so good. Then, with a sudden remembrance of the bitterness of his own disappointment:

"They was narsty solgers; there was no gee-gees, and no Capteens, and no—neffin'!"

This last word came in after a queer look at Aunt Dacie, who screwed her mouth up, and shook her head. It was dawning upon Bobby that certain mysterious reasons existed why "Daddy" should not be alluded to lightly. He drew a deep sigh, as one who had escaped a danger only by the skin of his teeth, and, bending forward, smiled into Aunt Dacie's face.

"Bobby is better now," he said, "and Mammy is better too; and the narsty solgers do be gone away."

There could be no sort of doubt as to "Mammy" being better: better, indeed, than she had been since those terrible days whose cruel bitterness had dried up the fountain of her tears, and turned her heart to stone. She, too, sobbed now and

again, but spoke quite quietly and contentedly to Mazie as they sat side by side on the old settle. She seemed to feel some element of comfort in my darling's nearness; for she held the end of the long, soft, brown fur that hung about her slender throat, and kept stroking it gently as she talked.

I had good news for Bessy, and gave it gladly. The prison authorities had agreed to give her regular work as soon as she should be fit to enter upon new duties.

"I am quite fit now, sir," she said, rising, and flushing with pleasure and surprise. "I shall be a different woman after this. Crying is always good for a woman when her heart is too full to hold; and then, sir, there's Bobby to think of," with a glance at the urchin on the stool.

"Yes, there's me," put in Bobby, evidently feeling that his existence was a thing for us all to congratulate ourselves upon. Which indeed it was.

He was a bad, bold boy, was Bobby, and always in some mischief or other; still, what would Bessy have done without him in these darksome days?

"I'm afraid I've been wilful in my sorrow, sir," continued Bessy, wiping her eyes, wherein the tears still rose readily, "but I won't be so no more. It's been terrible hard, sir; and them as is about one makes it harder still. The people here know my story, and them sort 'll throw a thing at you when they've got it handy like. Even in the street I've heard folk say, a-following me wi' their eyes: 'That's the woman whose husband——'"

She stopped, and made a forlorn gesture, while Aunt Dacie gave a horrified glance at Bobby. But Bessy was too terribly in earnest to think of Bobby. She soon recovered voice, and went on quietly

enough, holding Mazie's little hand, which had stolen into hers, close and fast.

"I shan't be afraid, sir, to go about your place—the prison I mean—after work. They don't think so much of them sort of things there, naturally being, as you may say, used to them like."

Aunt Dacie's face was a study. To hear Bessy speak you would have thought we were in the habit of hanging half-a-dozen or so of our prisoners every morning, as they used to do in the "good old times." I saw a smile just touch the corner of Mazie's lips as she turned her head aside. Bessy's simple faith in her own view of things, and Aunt Dacie's horror and amaze, made a droll enough picture. The humorous ever trips at the heels of the tragic.

We three were soon sauntering slowly down the street, for I thought I might give myself the indulgence of setting the two ladies on their way homewards.

We passed the prison, dark and gloomy, with great gates closed; and George Bramwell, who saluted me, looking through the wicket.

"How is old David?" said Aunt Dacie, "we often speak of him."

Which shows that my interests had become theirs, as well as theirs mine.

"He is very comfortable just now," I answered. Then I stopped and hesitated a moment. "You do not often come so far as this, Miss Birt. It would be a great happiness to him to see you and Miss Margaret."

They were delighted at the idea; at least Aunt Dacie said she was, and Mazie looked so.

Mazie was strangely silent altogether this morning, and I could see had been deeply impressed with the scene at poor Bessy's.

George was happy to be allowed to usher in such distinguished visitors to his father; and, as to old David himself, you would have thought he would have shaken Aunt Dacie's hand off. He was more timid with Mazie, holding her soft, white fingers gingerly, and smiling at the contrast they showed against his gnarled and veined old hands.

There was a sharp look in his twinkling grey eyes as he glanced from Mazie to me, and back again, that made me feel rather flurried. You could never count upon David in the matter of what he might say, and we all knew—at least all those of us whose calling takes them much among the

sick and dying, that a strange intuition and clearness of perception is often given to those who are nearing death. I was glad when Aunt Dacie claimed his attention.

"Do you weary, lying here all the day!" she said, in her gentle, tender way.

David gave an upward glance at the ceiling, a look all round the walls of the little gate-house room.

"One would be hard put to 't, ma'm, to get weary wi' such a mort o' foine picters to look at. My son George, he papered this here, and I count there ain't such another sight—in the way of a wall-paper—nowheres, be where may the other. There's allus something new to be searched out among the lot; and, as for 't reading on 't ceiling, if a body only could get near enough to see it, he'd never want for knowledge of the times when them papers was wrote."

We all looked up, we all looked round. There they were—plain pictures, coloured pictures, pictures of all shapes and sizes, from all manner of illustrated papers. A Cardinal, in glorious flowing scarlet robes, found himself cheek by jowl with a pictured Punch and Judy show. Over the mantel-shelf was a lithograph of the Queen, and all round about her were little posies of brightly-coloured flowers, taken—so David told us—from a nurseryman's catalogue. Every inch of the walls was covered with something or another in the pictorial line, and all were old friends to David; though the Cardinal—whom he called a "fine chap, and no mistake," and "the Queen, Heaven bless her!" with her surrounding of fair flowers—were his favourites.

"It's my son George as did 'em every one," he said again; and there stood George, with all an artist's mingled pride and shyness, twisting his cap in his hands, and muttering that it "wasn't worth makin' a fuss over, when all was said and done;" but evidently feeling all the while that our praise was not ill-bestowed.

"There's a sight of information up there," he said, with a jerk of his thumb towards the ceiling, which was entirely covered with letter-press.

"Ay, ay," chuckled the old man. "If the flies as settle there so thick 't summer could bo' read, their heads 'ud be fair brasted wi' all the larnin' they'd get."

There was no contradicting this assertion, to which Aunt Dacie assented with a solemn air that was sufficiently amusing. The quaint, rough ring of David's North-

country tongue—never quite lost during his long years of London life—puzzled her, I could see.

"And now, George," went on the old man, "before they leave us, I reckon the ladies would like to see Joseph Stubbs."

Between the wall and David's bed was a narrow space, and in this space an old arm-chair, cushioned with a shabby shawl folded thickly. Upon this shawl might be seen a great bunch of tawny fur, wrapped round with a tawny tail. Sometimes two great green eyes looked at you from out the shadow.

"Joseph won't do—nor Stubbs won't do. He must have the whole thing right and straight, or there isn't a stir out of him—is there, George?" said David.

George shook his head.

"Please, sir, to try him—just for the ladies to see for theirsens. He's naught bo' a cat, bo' he has his ways, same as a Christian."

So we called "Joseph," and we called "Stubbs." Aunt Dacie even went so far as to try the familiar and enticing "Joe."

But the tawny cat never moved. Then, in my best clerical voice, I addressed him:

"Joseph Stubbs, come and be polite to the ladies."

With a mighty stretch, and arching of a long, tawny back, the creature rose in his lair, stepped delicately across the counterpane, and rubbed his sleek head against Mazie's arm.

"Ay, bo' he has sense, has Joseph Stubbs," said the old man, in high delight. "He's full o' notions, and they're gradely ones too, is Joseph Stubbs. What friends they be, surely, all in a moment like! Bean't he a cute 'un now, sir, bean't he just?"

Again I fancied some hidden significance in old David's look and words, and I was not sorry when Joseph Stubbs retreated once more to his arm-chair, and folded himself up to sleep.

"You see, marm," said David to Aunt Dacie, who was deeply interested in the cat, "when my missis wur alive, hoo lay that side o' t' bed, and hoo had bad nights. Times and times as hoo couldna' sleep; and Joseph Stubbs and her grew company for each other. Hoo used to talk to 'un wonderful, and 'un to her. I've woke many a time and heern them at it. He comforted her wonderful, did Joseph Stubbs; and when she died, sir, he fretted

same as a Christian, and more than most. He'll fret after me when my time comes; but not same as he did after Mary—tain't in natur he should."

"How did he come by such an odd name?" said Aunt Dacie, who was seated in great state by the fireside in the "best chair"—a relic of David's native North-country village.

As Miss Birt spoke, David eyed her with a certain dignity.

"He was allers called Joseph Stubbs, was that there cat, marm. No one never knowed him to be aught else."

David was evidently aggrieved at what he saw fit to consider an indiscreet question on the part of Aunt Dacie, but he soon recovered himself in the delights of a glib account of the cat's many gifts.

"He knows the sound of Her Majesty's carriage, sir, same as yo' might; an' he goes out along of my son George, and looks grave like at them as gets a ride in it for nothin'. He stands by t' big gate wi' a tale straight oop, and he looks at t' bad 'uns like as if he'd say, 'Yo'd ought'er be ashamed of you'sens, so yo' ought, every one of yo'.' His ears is tore to rage wi' foighten, fur he conna abide the sight of another cat anywheres—he loikes to have the wuld to himsen', does Joseph Stubbs. He has his ways, sir, same as a Christian."

The typical Christian, whose ways were as those of Joseph Stubbs, seemed to puzzle Aunt Dacie not a little.

"I've heard a moighty lot about yo' all from t' minister here," said old David, as we were taking leave of him, "and can't feel strange-like to ony one of ye; and I'm right fain yo've steppit in to see me so friendly and comf'ble. I'm sorry t' little wench bean't here for to show yo' her bonnie face and the pretty curls on her yed. I reckon yo've heard on her, ony-way——"

"Oh yes! Oh yes!" they said, eagerly. "Mr. Draycott has spoken of her over and over again——"

He heard this with a pleased smile, and then my darling, following Miss Dacie, held out her hand to him, and he, looking keenly and questioningly, as it seemed to me, at the sweet face bending over him, with a gentle daring took her other hand as well, and so held them.

"Heaven bless yo', my dear," he said, solemnly, "and all them as loves yo'——"

I saw a quiver pass across the face I loved; and then, in a moment, Mazie had knelt beside the bed, and was speaking:

"May Heaven bless you, too, and make your bed in your sickness. I shall think of you, and keep you in my prayers. I shall not forget."

The old man seemed too much touched for any more words to come easy. I saw the shimmer of tears in the sunken eyes that shone beneath the grey, pent-house brows, the tremble round the pallid lips.

It had struck to my heart to hear Mazie speak like that. I had realised of late how the girl was fast becoming the woman; that all the latent earnestness of a character capable of peculiar intensity of aspiration and feeling, was developing with rapid strides. I had dared to whisper to my own heart the name of the magician whose touch was working this beautiful change; but I had hardly felt the reality of these things. It had never been brought home to me until I saw that gracious head bowed by old David's bedside, and heard the words of faith and comfort uttered by the lips I loved.

As we turned out of the wicket, I saw Miss Dacie look back at the looming mass of tall buildings behind—the prison that hid in its dark breast so many a tale of sin and sorrow, of blighted lives, and cruel memories.

"It looks very black and desolate, does it not?" I said, as she went on after Miss Dacie through the gateway.

"I do not think of it like that," she said, looking up at me with grave, trustful eyes. "I only think of your work in it—of the help, and the comfort, and the hope—and so it seems beautiful, not dark or gloomy any more. You have told us so much about it all, that we feel almost to have part and lot in it, somehow. I mean Aunt Dacie—and Dumphie—and—and——"

Oh, precious stammering tongue! Oh, priceless woman-heart, showing me in such sweet and artless fashion the depths of that beautiful sympathy and tenderness of thine that is as the light of my eyes, the "heart of my heart!"

Miss Dacie kept ahead of us. The truth was that dear Aunt Dacie had been, as I could well see, "upset." She had never heard the child of her love, the "little one" bequeathed to her care by the dying mother, speak as she had done to-day. Those who watch all the time see least. In her eyes Mazie was still a child; a creature to be cherished and protected, not a creature able to stand alone and give to others in like measure as God had given

to her, of sympathy, and help, and consolation. I could see that Aunt Dacie's lips were screwed up, her eyes rounder than usual. She was all ruffled, like a hen that, having hatched a duckling, sees it, one fine day, take to the water, and swim away across the pond.

Before we parted, Miss Dacie told me that Dumphie wanted to see me, to have a talk with me about something; what, she knew not.

"I am going to the City. I will look in at the 'curmudgeon's,' and ask McGregor to come and have tea with me, to-night."

At this Mazie laughed.

"It sounds so droll to hear you call my brother, McGregor. He is just Dumphie—only Dumphie, and Mr. Alison is not a 'curmudgeon' any more. Do you know he sent me a gold watch and chain—such a beauty—the other day; and he told Dumphie he would do anything for any of us, 'so long as we never go near him.'"

"There is no fear of that," said Miss Dacie, bridling. "We are none of us likely to go where we are not wanted, I should hope!"

I was soon on my solitary way City-wards; but the streets were still paved with gold, and the hoardings covered with all manner of advertisements, might have been trees of wondrous foliage and golden fruit, for the touch of a little hand lingered on my palm, and a sweet store of precious words were garnered in my heart. At Alison and Co.'s I had a glimpse of the "curmudgeon," in propria persona—a stout, red-faced man, like Hamlet, "scant of breath," with a fringe of grey hair all round his business-like head, and a huge gold seal dangling from his huge gold chain.

Having been told that Mr. McGregor was out, I had written a line, and just given it to a clerk when this apparition burst upon my view, and, alas! I on him. The warehouse of this worthy City firm was a palace of its kind; the room from which the senior partner issued, as I could see through the open door, a marvel of costly comfort.

The staircase that led from the basement, with its marble pillars, to the floor where endless counting-houses were ranged—all radiating, as it were, from the Central Sun, that of the Senior Partner—was as broad as that of some nobleman's mansion, and carpeted with velvet pile so thick that the foot sank in it as if it were so much moss. I was—foolishly—lingering, after having delivered my note, when Mr. Alison

appeared. Truth to tell, I was looking at the sumptuous surroundings, and trying to call up a vision of what Dumphie must have looked and felt like, as he mounted those stairs, and bearded the lion in his den. Quite cool, I could fancy, and wholly unawed by the signs of wealth around him. Resolute as one who leads a forlorn hope, panoplied and fortified by the thought of "the lads" at home, and what his errand meant to them.

"Is that—ahem—person asking his way anywhere?" said an irate voice just above me—the sound driving forth the ghost of the past, which I had been conjuring up so diligently.

"No, sir," answered a frightened-looking clerk, "it's only a note for Mr. McGregor."

"None of his relations—I hope!" was the gracious rejoinder.

"No, sir. Oh, dear no, sir! Merely a friend."

The glibness of the reply said volumes for the business capacities of that clerk, if it left his veracity doubtful.

My own business, as well as Dumphie's, completed, I betook myself homewards; and then and there an unpleasant train of thought set in.

What could it be that Dumphie "wanted to talk to me about"?

Was it possible that he—with a man's clearer perceptions—had read the story of my love for Masie, while Aunt Dacie remained blind? Was he not "Papa Birt" to the rest—a sort of self-constituted head of the family? Besides, was not that dainty maiden, that fair unfolded flower, the very apple of his eye?

Dumphie never looked beyond the little household in Prospect Place for joy or sorrow. If things were well with them, then he was content; if things went ill, then must he put his broad shoulder to the wheel and smooth the troubles away. In this home Masie was queen. All the rest, as it were, circled round her.

Had not Aunt Dacie told me the touching story of how the tiny, motherless baby—years and years ago—lay sleeping in her fair white cradle, with Dumphie gently touching the rockers, and the other lads squatted round, keeping guard over this new gift of Heaven?

Would he not be equally on guard now, watching over his darling's happiness? Were his eyes so true and so tender for nothing? Well—I need not fear his searching.

Of outward attractions I have small store to offer. Hasledean of Corpus did not exaggerate much when he drew that immortal portrait of "Old Draycott, ten years hence."

But, at heart, I am worthy of a woman's love; even though that woman be Margaret Birt. I can love truly, faithfully, entirely—these capabilities have developed in me of late, and made me very conscious of their presence—I can lay this heart of mine bare; I can promise a devotion to her happiness—equal to his own. Knowing Dumphie, I dare not say greater. I can tell him what her sympathy in my work will be to me—and to those among whom my work is cast. I can tell him that never, until now, have I understood the meaning of the word "helpmeet." I can tell him that he might easily light upon some younger, better-looking, more "taking" man than Louis Draycott for his sister's lover; but none who will love her more devotedly, cherish her more fondly, uphold her more tenderly through all the "changes and chances of this mortal life."

Is this, then, the thing that Dumphie wants to have a "talk" with me about?

What can it be else? Yet, stay. Surely no spectre from the terrible past can be raising its ghastly head to glare upon me now? No sinister and blighting rumour, no ugly tales of what is buried deep, deep down, can have reached the ears of those so far removed from all my past life? No. I will put the thought from me. The earth is battened down too hard and fast upon that cruel past for it to rise and confront me now.

And—for the wrong I did—have I not suffered?

THE MILD HINDU.

ACCORDING to the census of 1831, there were close upon one hundred and forty-five millions of our fellow-subjects in British India classed as Hindus. And, according to Dr. (now Sir) W. W. Hunter, these one hundred and forty-five millions are, in large part, directly, and the remainder indirectly, sprung from the same Aryan stock as ourselves. Ethnologically speaking, they are our brothers, and, politically speaking, they are components, with us, of the great British Empire. But in spite of this racial and national relationship, we in England do not pay much

attention to them, and we trouble ourselves very little to learn what manner of people they are. True, there are abundance of wise, and learned, and interesting—as well as dry, and dull, and statistical—books about India and her peoples. But these books are read only by the few, and the many at home are content to limit their interest in their Indian brothers to the amount of an annual subscription to some Indian Mission Fund.

Let us, however, endeavour to induce our readers to take a closer interest in this very wide and interesting subject. Let us ask them to go with us a little while to see "the mild Hindu" at home.

Sir William Hunter, the greatest living authority on the history and economics of India, tells us that the great mixed population now known as Hindus, grew out of a fusing of the Aryan and non-Aryan races, under the Brahmins, who stepped to the front upon the decay of Buddhism in the Peninsula.

There were several centuries of conflict between the two creeds; but the eighth century is taken as the turning-point, and the beginning of the triumph of Hinduism. Broadly, then, Hinduism is a social organisation and a religious confederacy some eleven centuries old, and numbering, as we have said, some hundred and forty-five millions of persons in the British dominions alone, without counting the independent and feudatory states of India. As a social organisation, it rests upon Caste; as a religious confederacy, it represents a combination of the Brahmanical faith with Buddhism, and the remains of even older rites.

It is not our purpose, however, to examine the character of the Vedas and the growth of the Eastern religions and castes, but to take a look at the people as they are to-day.

The spirit of Hinduism has been well described as in harmony with those well-known verses of Wordsworth beginning, "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting," and it teaches, that even before a child is born into a world of ceremonies, certain ceremonies must be performed on its behalf. The astrologers are consulted by the anxious mother, who faithfully observes the instructions given as to diet, offerings to the gods, etc. But after the interesting event has happened, the poor mother is regarded as "unclean" for three weeks, if it be a boy, and for a month, if it be a girl, during which period she must

not enter her husband's house, but must dwell in a shed apart—a practice analogous to what has been noticed of some of the inhabitants of even Arctic climates.

Every Hindu mother desires a son, because sons are a source of strength and wealth, while daughters are a source of anxiety and expense. As one of their proverbs says: "Blind sons support their parents; but a prince's daughters extort money from them."

The ceremonial process, which begins before birth, continues until and after death. To describe the life of a Hindu—as Mr. W. J. Wilkins* says—is to describe the Hindu religion, for religion with him is not a thing for particular times and seasons, but regulates all the relations of his life. And as the religion of the Hindus has many phases, and varies in details of observance with locality, so do their customs and modes of life vary. What, then, we have to describe is not literally applicable to the whole of the communities of the one hundred and forty-five millions of Hindus; but the broad lines, we believe, will cover the majority of the population.

After the "mild Hindu" is born, his horoscope is prepared by an astrologer, who, on payment of a fee, forms a forecast of the child's fate—more or less elaborate according to the amount of the fee. The value of the horoscope in one sense need not be discussed, but its use in another may be pointed out. As there is no system of registration of births, these horoscopes are often produced and accepted in Law Courts as evidence of age.

Now, having got our "mild Hindu" into the world, let us see what manner of place he is to live in.

"The typical Hindu family house," Mr. Wilkins tells us, "is built in the form of a quadrangle, with an open courtyard in the centre. Opposite to the entrance-gate is a platform, built to receive the images that are made for the periodic religious festivals that are held in honour of the various deities. On the ground-floor, the rooms to right and left of the courtyard are used largely as store-rooms, offices, etc.; whilst over these are the public reception-rooms, well lighted, and generally well furnished, some of them having chairs, etc., for the convenience of European visitors. Here, also, is a room in which the family idol is

* "Modern Hinduism," by W. J. Wilkins (London: T. Fisher Unwin), an interesting work, from which we have drawn much material for the present article.

kept, before which the priest performs service generally twice a day. All these apartments are used by the male members of the family only. Excepting at feasts, the meals are not taken there, unless there may happen to be a number of visitors, not being members of the family, who are not admitted into the more private portion of the house. From the back of the courtyard, a passage conducts into a second and smaller yard, which is also surrounded by rooms, in which the lady members of the family live. Here the meals are eaten, and here the sleeping apartments of the family are to be found. The guests sleep in the rooms adjoining the outer courtyard. These inner rooms are generally much smaller than those in the more public part of the house; and the windows are also smaller, and placed high in the walls—for Manu distinctly declared that it was not right for a woman to look out of the windows. During the day the men generally occupy the more public rooms, as they may be transacting business, or amusing themselves in various ways, whilst the women are engaged in household duties, or in their own forms of recreation. As it is considered indecorous for a man to speak to his wife during the day, their only time for conversation is when they retire to their own apartment for the night."

This is a fair description of the dwelling of a well-to-do Hindu; but, of course, the dwellings of the ryots, or peasants, are much more humble. In a book about "Bengal Peasant Life," by Mr. Day, we have the following description of a ryot's house:

"You enter the house, with your face to the east, through a small door of mango-wood in the street, and you go at once to the 'uthān,' or open yard, which is indispensable to the house of every peasant in the country. On the west side of the yard, on the same side as the gate, stands the 'bara ghar,' or big hut. This is the biggest, the neatest, and most elaborately finished of all Badan's huts. Its walls, which are of mud, are of great thickness; the thatch, which is of the straw of paddy, is more than a cubit deep; the bamboo framework, on which the thatch is laid, is well compacted together, every interstice being filled with the long and slender reed called *rārā*, alternating with another of red colour; the middle beam, which supports the thatch, though it is not made of the costly teak or *āl*, is made of the palmyra; and the floor is raised at least five feet from

the ground. The hut is about sixteen cubits long, and twelve broad, including the verandah, which faces the yard, and which is supported by props of palmyra. It is divided into two compartments of unequal size, the bigger one being Badan's sleeping-room, and the smaller one being the store-room of the family. The verandah is the parlour of the family. There friends and acquaintances sit on mats. In Badan's sleeping-room are kept the brass vessels of the house, and other valuables. There is no bedstead in it, for Badan sleeps on the mud floor, a mat and a quilt stuffed with cotton interposing between his body and mother earth. There is not much light in the room, for the thatch of the verandah—coming down very near the ground—prevents its admission, while there is but one small window high up in the wall towards the street.

"There is no furniture in the room; only, in one corner, a solitary box. In one side of the room two whole bamboos are stuck into the walls, on which clothes are hung, and on which the bedding is put up in the day. On the south side of the yard, and at right angles to the big hut, is a smaller hut of far inferior construction, which is used as a lumber-room, or rather as a tool-room, for keeping the implements of husbandry. In the verandah of this little hut is placed the 'dhenki,' or rice-husking pedal. From this circumstance the little hut is called the Dhenkisala. In the south-east corner of the yard, and at right angles to the Dhenkisala, is another hut of somewhat better construction, in which Gayarama (Badan's brother) sleeps, and a verandah which serves the purpose of a kitchen. The only other hut on the premises is the cow-house, situated to the north of the yard, nearly parallel to the big hut. The eastern side of the premises opens on a tank."

The Hindu family lives on the patriarchal system, and forms a sort of joint-stock company. Father, sons, grandsons, and nephews, place all their earnings in a common treasury, and the expenditure is under the control of the head of the family, or Karta. Even when from home, on business or in situations, the men must remit the balance of their earnings or wages to the Karta, who also takes charge of the women and children in the absence of the fathers and husbands.

This is a great convenience to the Hindu, who cannot take his family about with him; and so when the head of a family is

growing old, the sons take it in turn to remain at home to take care of the common interests, women and children. But it is not usual for a man to become a Karta himself until he has attained a considerable age, for when a father dies, it is his younger brother, and not his eldest son, who usually succeeds to the headship. Still, when a son does succeed, all his brothers, however near they may be to him in age, will submit to his authority as respectfully as they did to that of the father. At least, this used to be the case; but nowadays there is a growing spirit of freedom, and the younger members of a family will often, on the death of the Karta, insist upon a partition of the common property. The next person in authority in the family is the chief wife, who may be either the spouse or the mother of the Karta for the time being. Her influence controls the management of the household, and the conduct of the female members. She superintends the cooking, etc., and she is usually a very hard-working person indeed, for she has an immense number of religious festivals to attend to, and daily religious duties and ceremonies to perform in addition to her household work. Sometimes, as when a daughter marries a poorer man than her father, or one of those pests of the country, a Kulin Brahman, or travelling sacred husband, the family may be swelled by the addition of sons-in-law. But whatever objections there may be to the patriarchal system, it has one good feature—it obviates the necessity of poor-rates and poor-houses; for the idle and worthless, as well as the sick and aged members of a family, are sheltered and maintained just as if they were contributing their full share to the common purse. Wandering beggars, of course, are to be seen occasionally; but food and shelter are always accorded them, since it is considered a disgrace if any are known to be in actual want. This is the theory; but no doubt in India, as in other places, theory and practice are not always in perfect harmony.

The relatives are not the only members of a Hindu family. There is also the priest; for every well-appointed house has its shrine, at which no one but a Brahman can officiate. All Brahmans are not priests, but all priests are Brahmans. Now, if the Karta is not a Brahman himself, he must support a priest out of the common funds, whose work is to bathe and anoint the family idol; recite the ritual; make the offerings of fruit and flowers; and attend

all the births, deaths, and marriages in the family. He must have a room to himself, because, being of higher caste, he cannot eat with the others. His perquisites are the offerings given to the idol, and presents on the occasion of any family events. There is also a resident astrologer in wealthy families; but more important than both is the guru, or religious guide, who initiates the Hindu into his religion, and is an extraordinary institution altogether. A Hindu writer says:

"The guru is the medium of salvation, and, therefore, his position is higher than that of the priest. Woe to the Hindu whose body and soul have not been purified by the spiritual counsels of the guru! He lives and dies a veritable beast on earth, with no hope of immortal bliss. However charitable may be his gifts, however spotless his character, be his faith in the gods ever so strong, his salvation is impossible without the guru. Both the guru and the priest vie with each other in ignorance and conceit. Both are covetous, unprincipled, and up to every vice; but the guru is much more revered than his adversary, owing to the former being a less frequent visitor, and the speculative and mysterious nature of his avocations. The guru's sway over the family is complete. His visits are generally annual, unless he be in a fix (for money) on account of an impending matrimonial or funeral ceremony in his house, when he certainly comes to you for his ghostly fee. . . . At one time these visits were regarded as auspicious events. Paterfamilias would consider the morn to have auspiciously dawned which brought with it the radiant face of his guru. Dame Nature has selected him for his precious physiological and anatomical gifts. Picture to yourself a fat, short man, having what the doctors call 'an apoplectic make,' of pretty fair complexion, round face, short nose, long ears, and eyes protruding from their sockets. Picture that face as sleek and soft, shorn of hairy vegetation, and the crown of the head perpetually kept in artificial baldness save a long tuft of hair in the centre. His countenance does not show the least sign of worldly care; plenty and ease have always been his environment. He comes with half-a-dozen famished beggars, each of whom has an important part to play in his lord's drama. One prepares his food; another his hemp smoking and opium pills; a third looks after his treasure; a fourth shaves him and

anoints his body; whilst the sixth helps him in his amatory transactions. These are not paid servants, but mere hirelings, who follow him through fire and through water for anything 'that hath a stomach in it.'"

They are social leeches, these gurus, sucking the poor people unmercifully and battenning on their blood. In the most recent of the Hindu sacred books, the "Tantras," there has been a cunning interpolation in favour of the guru. It sets forth his infinite power in the most extravagant fashion, as thus:

"Of the word guru, the 'g' is the cause of friction; the 'r' destroys sin; the 'u' is Siva himself: the whole word is the Eternal Brahma, excellent and inexplicable. He, whose lips pronounce the sound guru, with what sin is he chargeable? The articulation of 'g' annihilates the sin even of killing a Brahman; the sins of the present birth are removed by pronouncing 'u;' of ten thousand births, by the pronunciation of 'ra.'"

This is laying it on a little too thick even for a Hindu. Truth compels us to state that the guru, generally, is a "shocking bad lot," and if the mild Hindu could only shake him off, he would be only too glad to do so. But, what between the priests and the gurus, the poor man cannot call even his soul his own. In fact, if he doesn't behave himself, his soul may be sent into a pig in his next stage of existence, or into some still more gross and humiliating form of animal life.

The life of the Indian lady—the wife of the really well-to-do Hindu—is not an enviable one. She is fenced round with all sorts of restrictions and formalities. She has no free-will, and she sees—even in the character of the apartments she occupies; in the fact that she cannot go outside her home without the consent of her husband; and in the elaborate arrangements which are made to secure her privacy on a journey—that her husband has been taught to regard her as one who is not to be implicitly trusted. Shut out by her ignorance from the world of literature, and from the employment of her mind and hands in work, she can only waste her days in frivolous occupations. Prohibited by custom from conversation with her husband, except in her own chamber; and by her want of education from sharing in his thoughts, and from being his confidential companion; she feels that she is little more to him than a slave.

As the gentlemen of the family sit and talk and amuse themselves in various ways, they are independent to a large extent of the pleasure that the company and conversation of a wife would afford.

Hindu gentlemen used to be astonished when they saw Englishmen entrust their wives to the protection of a friend on a journey.

And even more degrading than all, perhaps, is the circumstance of losing all name and identity after marriage, and being known merely as the "Mother of So-and-So." Then the customs of infant marriage and widowhood are sources of infinite misery and injustice in India, and tend to complete the degradation of woman. These subjects, however, are too wide for more than mere reference in passing just now; but it may be mentioned as a hopeful sign that some of the most able and enlightened of the Hindu gentlemen are now warmly co-operating with English ladies in efforts at reform in these customs of the country. Lord Dufferin has declared it to be impolitic for the Government to attempt to prohibit infant marriages by legislation, as he holds that any reform, to be wholesome and effective, must come from the Hindus themselves. We like to think that it is coming, and as rapidly as anything can evolve among Oriental races.

The Hindu boy is, as has been said, a much more important being than a Hindu girl. Born amid ceremonies, he is, at the age of eight, initiated with ceremony into the mysteries of his religion; the process being, as one may say, analogous to Confirmation in the Church of England. The rite is performed by the guru, who thus early gets the mild Hindu into his clutches. Among the higher castes "the sacred thread" is put on after this initiation—this being a necklace of twisted thread, which is the mark of the "spiritual aristocracy of India," and more highly prized than even the emblems of nobility which are paraded among Occidental nations.

The mention of initiation opens up a very wide subject—that of the numerous religious sects of the Hindus—much too wide, indeed, for the scope of the present article. Sir William Hunter mentions thirteen chief sects who worship Siva, and twenty leading sects who worship Vishnu; but the lesser branches of these are innumerable, besides many sects of mixed and peculiar faiths. Broadly, in the Hindu mythology, there is a Divine

Triad, consisting of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer. Each personality has its followers; but those of Brahma are now few and scattered. Those of Vishnu are found chiefly in the middle classes; while those of Siva are to be found in all classes, more or less mixed up with philosophic symbolism. Sir William Hunter further says that the educated Hindu recognises, above and beyond his chosen Deity of the Triad, the Param-eswara, or One First Cause, whom the eye has not seen, and the mind cannot conceive, but who may be worshipped in any one of the forms in which he manifests his power to men.

Once upon a time, Buddhism was almost the universal religion in India. As the result of Gautama's teaching, it gained ascendancy between 600 and 300 B.C.; it undermined the power of the Brahmans, and repudiated Caste. But later came as powerful a reaction—although how and why brought about history does not explain very clearly—until Hinduism once more dominated the races. According to Mr. Rhys Davids, there are now only some seven millions of pure Buddhists in India and Burmah; but of these, judging by the census figures of 1881, not more than about a quarter of a million are in British India proper.

Hinduism is very far, then, from being the "compact system" it appears at first sight; and there are under it more complications, more diversities of opinion, more differences of practice than even under Christianity. Obviously we cannot go into details here, but in general it may be said that while each Hindu has his own chosen deity, he also acknowledges the godhead of the others. No doubt some of the abuses of Siva-worship are viewed with abhorrence by Vishnuites, and vice versa. And there are a great variety of inferior deities, spirits, or fetiches. On this point Mr. Wilkins says:

"An old Brāhman pundit and priest, with whom I frequently conversed on these subjects, told me that in his own daily worship he first made an offering to his own chosen deity, Nārāyana (Vishnu), and when this was done, he threw a handful of rice broadcast for the other deities to scramble for; and it was his hope that by thus recognising the existence and authority of these—though there was no clear notion in his mind respecting any one of them—that he would keep them in good humour towards himself. He further as-

sured me that the general idea of the Hindu was this. 'We must worship our own chosen deity with earnestness and devotion; but in order not to be disrespectful to the others, and bring upon ourselves their resentment, we must give a general acknowledgement of their existence and authority.' Stories are to be found in the Puranas clearly teaching that the most earnest devotee of one deity is not at all safe from evils that others may bring upon him; hence arises this practice of a general acknowledgement of the other beings who claim the worship of the people."

The Puranas are the Sanscrit theological works, in which the rival systems of Vishnuism and Sivaism are embodied. Each Purana lauds its own deity, and disparages, more or less directly, the other; and among them they set up quite a new mythology of minor gods, different from the old Pantheon.

As a further illustration of the sectarian character of the Puranas, it may be mentioned that in the Padma Purana, the eighteen books are classified as follows. Six of them have a general bias in favour of Siva, and inculcate his peculiar worship; are said to be imbued with the spirit of Tāmāsa, or darkness, and the study of them condemns a man to hell. Six are imbued with Satvika, or truth, and are devoted to the praise of Vishnu—the study of these is said to procure Mukti, that is, final deliverance from the evils of life and absorption into the deity. The other six are said to be imbued with Rajasa, or passion—these are devoted to the praise of Sakṭi, or the female principle in nature, and their study will ensure entrance into Swarga, or heaven, a smaller boon than "mukti," because its bliss is but temporary; for when a person has enjoyed all the bliss his good deeds have procured for him there, he has to be re-born into the world, and again suffer all the ills of life on earth.

"I shall never forget," says Mr. Wilkins, "the lesson I learned from some Brahmans on this subject. After preaching in a village, the priests of a neighbouring temple invited me to their home, and, in a confidential manner, asked me to tell them in a few words the essence of the religion I was trying to set up in India. After speaking of Jesus and His work, and assuring them that His disciples were by Him made pure, and then admitted into (Swarga) heaven—after a little consideration, they said that if that was all I had to offer, Christianity had no attraction for

them; they wished for 'mukti'—absorption into deity, not merely entrance into heaven, the blessedness of which they believed to be terminable!"

Polytheism, then, is the system of Hinduism, and among the masses of the people it is polytheism in very gross forms. Nevertheless, there are also high and philosophic forms of Hinduism which merit respect, and even a sort of admiration. There are fanatics in every religion, and, absurd as are some of those among the Hindus, they are not greatly more so than among the Mahomedans, and, perhaps, even than among the earlier Christians.

Some of the Hindu ascetics are, however, very curious. For instance, the Urdhabahus (holders up of arms) are those who stand in one posture for years, holding one or both of their arms above the head until the muscles become contracted, and they cannot bring them down again to their sides. Some also close their fists, and allow their nails to grow until they completely pass through the hands. These men generally travel alone, and wander from shrine to shrine. The Akasmukhis, again, are those who turn their face towards the sky, until the muscles of the neck become fixed, and they cannot alter this most painful position. The peculiarity of the Nakhis is, that they allow their nails to grow without being cut. The Gadaras travel about with a small pan of metal, in which they burn sandal and other scented wood in the houses they may visit collecting alms; their method of asking alms being the mere repetition of the word "Alakh," meaning that God's nature is incapable of being described.

The Sukharas, Rukharas, and Ukharas, are other ascetics who have nothing distinctive save their dress, excepting the Ukharas, who drink spirituous liquors and eat meat. The Nagas are those who go about naked, allow their hair and beards to grow, use arms, and seem to be ready to take part in any rows that may arise—a sort of professional vagabonds.

Most terrible of all are the Thugs, whose religion is murder; and if any one wants to know anything about this remarkable sect—now, happily, almost if not entirely extinct—he should read that wonderful book by Captain Meadows Taylor, called "The Confessions of a Thug."

But enough of the religious sects of Hinduism. The tendency of the educated classes is thought to be towards the new

Deistic sect established by Babu Keahub Chunder Sen, not many years ago, called the Brahmo Samaj, which aims at breaking down caste, abolishing infant-marriage and enforced widowhood, and broadening generally the aspirations and practices of the professors of the faith.

The mention of caste recalls what we said, that Hinduism is also a social organisation. Its basis is caste; and it is by caste distinctions that the Hindu religion has been so well preserved. The word itself is of Portuguese origin, and was applied by the Portuguese conquerors to designate the peculiar systems of worship and of social distinctions which they observed among the Hindus. The Indian word is "jati," or gens, and "jatibheda" means the distinction of races. Caste, however, no longer means difference of race, but every conceivable distinction of original, hereditary, religious, artificial, and conventional import. Some idea of the minute regulations, etc., of the system may be gathered from the following extract from Dr. Wilson's work on "Caste:"

"It has for infancy, pupillage, and manhood, its ordained methods of sucking, sipping, drinking, and eating; of washing, anointing; of clothing and ornamenting the body; of sitting, rising, reclining; of moving, visiting, travelling; of speaking, reading, listening, and reciting; and of meditating, singing, working, and fighting. It has its laws for social and religious rights, privileges, and occupations; for education, duty, religious service; for errors, sins, transgressions; for intercommunion, avoidance, and excommunication; for defilement and purification; for fines and other punishments. It unfolds the ways of committing what it calls sin, accumulating sin, and of putting away sin; of acquiring, dispensing, and losing merit. It treats of inheritance, conveyance, possession, and dispossession of property; and of bargains, gains, loss and ruin. It deals with death, burial, and burning; and with commemoration, assistance, and injury after death. It interferes, in short, with all the relations and events of life, and with what precedes and follows, or what is supposed to precede and follow, life. It reigns supreme in the innumerable classes and divisions of the Hindus, whether they originate in family descent, in religious opinions, in civil or sacred occupations, or in local residence; and it professes to regulate all their interests, affairs, and relationships. Caste is the guiding principle

of each of the classes and divisions of the Hindus, viewed in their distinct and associated capacity. A caste is any of the classes or divisions of Hindu society. The authority of caste rests partly on written laws, partly on legendary fables and narratives, partly on the injunctions of instructors and priests, partly on custom and usage, and partly on the caprice and convenience of its votaries. 'The roots of the law,' says Manu, 'are the whole Veda, the ordinances and observances of such as perfectly understand it, the immemorial customs of good men and self-satisfaction.' No doubt that man who shall follow the rules prescribed in the Shruti (what was heard from the Ved), and in the Smriti (what was remembered from the laws) will acquire fame in this life, and in the next inexpressible happiness." Most of the castes have peculiar marks, which those initiated have to wear; but there is one common to all: "The great index of Hinduism is the tuft of hair on the crown of the head"—by which, according to the popular notion, the wearer is to be raised to heaven—"which is left there on the performance of the sacrament of tonsure, on the first or third year after birth in the case of the three great classes of the Hindus; and in the eighth year after the conception of a Brahman, in the eleventh from that of a Kshatriya, and in the twelfth from that of a Vaishya, the investiture with the sacred cord should occur."

It is impossible here even to enumerate the hundreds of varieties and subdivisions of caste. Indeed, Dr. Wilson, who died before he completed his work, had filled two volumes without exhausting the Brahman subdivisions alone. But there are four principal castes from which all the others, with their minor differences, spring. First, the Brahman, the highest of all, the first-born, which sprang from the mouth of the Supreme, is the rightful possessor of the Veda, and the chief of the whole creation. The power of the Brahman is thus expressed:

The whole world is under the power of the gods.
The gods are under the power of the Mantras (or charms used by Brahmans).
The Mantras are under the power of the Brahmans.
The Brahman is therefore our god.

The conclusion, it will be observed, is irresistible, if the premises of the syllogism be true. The Brahmans, then, are the social and religious aristocrats; and out of their caste the priesthood can alone spring. The next great caste is the Kshatriya,

which was produced by the arms of Brahma, and is the warrior caste. The third great caste is the Vaishya, which sprang from the thigh of Brahma, and comprises the merchant and farmer. The fourth great caste is the Sudra, which sprang from the feet of Brahma, and comprises the berrers of wood and drawers of water, whose duty it is to minister to the three higher castes.

There are other traditions of the fourfold origin of the Hindu race, but the above is that most commonly accepted. In Bengal there are now virtually only two of the original castes—the Brahmans and the Sudras, both subdivided into many classes, forming distinct castes in themselves. The pure Kshatriyas and the pure Vaishyas are now practically extinct; but what are now known as Sudras are the descendants of a fusion of some of the other castes. The most numerous of the well-to-do Hindus, Mr. Wilkins tells us, belong to the Vaidya and Kayastha branches of the Sudra caste. In theory, however, the Brahman remains supreme; and in practice, among the uneducated masses, he is still venerated as almost divine. The educated classes, as a rule, do not care greatly for the retention of caste, but many continue under its restraints merely on social grounds, as they do not wish to be ostracised, and they shrink from having their sons and daughters refused in marriage by families of their own race. Still, the consensus of opinion among intelligent and observing Anglo-Indians is that caste is doomed. Its own barriers have been already broken, and the whole system will gradually crumble to pieces; but the process will be slow.

Perhaps an indulgent editor may permit us, on another occasion, to say something more about caste and the wretched marriage-customs which are the curse of India. But meanwhile we must close our review of "the mild Hindu." And yet, if any one asks: "What is a Hindu?" we are bound to admit that, even as was pointed out in the Bengal Census Report of 1881, no satisfactory answer is yet forthcoming. "No answer, in fact, exists, for the term, in its modern acceptation, denotes neither a church nor a people, but a general expression, devoid of precision, and embracing alike the most punctilious disciples of pure Vedantism, the Agnostic youth, who is the product of Western education, and the semi-barbarous

hill-man, who eats without scruple anything he can procure, and is as ignorant of the Hindu mythology as the stone he worships in times of sickness and danger."

PARIS MAKING READY.

EVERYWHERE you go you find workmen in possession; flying scaffolds hang down from the fronts of the tall houses; paint-pots, whitewash buckets, are to be tumbled over in all directions—in every doorway you must gather yourself into a compact mass, and squeeze past panels all wet with paint, or sticky with varnish. "Paris se pare," she is putting on her best bib and tucker—clean and bright is not enough, she must be enamelled, resplendent. You arrive at the quiet hotel of ancient reputation; it is blocked with ladders and boarded gangways—the garçon shows you where to duck your head, and how to steer your way among planks and tressels. Madame, driven from her bureau, has encamped, with her desk, in a vacant corner of the salle, where she wrings her hands despairingly over a confused heap of account-books and dockets. Monsieur is delighted to receive you, but desolated at the confusion in which you find him. A chamber, yes—most certainly! But which chamber? Numéro ci, numéro là, where can a stray traveller at last find a nest? When a room is found, it is held in full possession by the work-people. The whole house is like a grove of singing birds. Jules, and Adolphe, and Pierre are carolling at the top of their voices, as they wield brush, or hammer, or trowel, and their voices mingle with the bumping of ladders, the rattle of planks, and the clatter of tools. Still, the French workman is adroit; he does not splash much with his plaster, or scatter showers of paint over the passers-by.

Yes, everywhere is this note of preparation to be heard—a brisk and cheerful note, for is not this forthcoming Exposition a thing to be brisk and cheerful over? Are these streets to be repaired? It is well to get the enterprise over forthwith. And piles of stones and excavated earth encumber the corners of the Boulevards. As for new buildings, they are hurried on with feverish haste. All must be ready by the sixth of May—the sackcloth removed; the ashes swept up; the covers taken off the furniture. The trees may be bare now, but in May all will be in full leaf.

All the world will be in Paris, and all the world must see Paris at her very best and brightest.

This morning, too, a cheerful note is ringing through the streets. The horn of the hunter is heard upon the Boulevards—the strange, strident notes of the "cor de chasse," which somehow seem to recall so vividly the days of old France. It is at the corner of the Rue Royale, with the church of La Madeleine in full view. There is not much that is cheerful about the Madeleine itself; which looks more like an enormous tomb than a church, with its great bronze gates, that might be the entrance—well, not exactly—to Paradise. When the flower-sellers are no longer there with their booths, and bright flowers, and green shrubs, and the scent of spring blossoms and newly-turned mould, the Madeleine looms gloomily enough over the bright scene round about.

Ah, it was just here that the last scene was enacted in the terrible tragedy of the Commune! Driven by the overwhelming forces of the Government from their barricades in the Rue Royale, the last survivors of the insurrection—some three hundred in number—took refuge in the Madeleine, and were slaughtered there to a man by the infuriated soldiery. Is it any wonder that the building has a gloomy air about it which no sunshine can brighten?

There is a funeral at the Madeleine—there is always a funeral there—but this is of a high and expensive class. It is an obsequy of ten thousand francs, says a well-informed bystander. The front of the church is hung with black, sprinkled with silver tears; the horses are caparisoned with black, and a long procession passes up the steep flight of steps that lead to the great bronze doors—the prevailing sombre hue relieved by the glitter of uniforms. Some high functionary, no doubt, to-day takes his leave of bright and charming Paris. But, as the funereal pomp disappears beneath the hangings—sable, charged with argent—a bright cavalcade appears at the corner of the street, mounted chasseurs in the garb of the Regency, who halt and sound upon their trumpets a stirring fanfare.

Away clatter the hoofs towards the Place de la Concorde, in which direction there is a gentle flow of idlers, while men, with bundles of papers under their arms, cry in nasal tones: "Programmes Officiels de la grande Cavalcade." Even here there is a note of preparation, for the cavalcade

for the benefit of the Parisian charity called the "Mouthful of Bread;" the object of which is that no hungry person may want a morsel of bread. And the newspapers have urged the Parisians to contribute liberally to this charity, so that when strangers visit the Exposition they may see no mendicant or hungry person anywhere in the city.

When the Place de la Concorde opens to view, it is found to be well filled with a good-humoured, but slightly cynical crowd, among whom are moving masks and costumes of all kinds, received with bantering applause or jeering laughter, as the disguises are well or ill received by the surrounding populace. All the terraces, too, are lined with spectators, and altogether the scene reminds the English spectator of Trafalgar Square and the days when popular demonstrations were held there. Only, there is no touch of seriousness here, nor any note of disorder.

And yet that all may not be so calm as appears on the surface is evident by the appearance, on the walls of the terraces and the bases of the monuments, of ominous-looking red placards. During the night, industrious enthusiasts have pasted up these bills all over Paris, and they purport to be an address of the anarchists to the people of Paris, urging them to abstain from all rejoicings attending the forthcoming gathering of capitalists called the Exposition, and to await, in dignified independence, the advent of the coming social revolution. But the manifesto of the anarchists causes very little emotion. Hunger, after all, is the great anarchy; and to-day, in Paris, there is work for everybody, bread for everybody, with amusement thrown in galore; and Paris, in a gay and laughing mood, cares not a centime for all that political stuff.

For as well as being the *mi-Carême*, always a popular holiday, this also promises to be the first real day of spring. A thousand indefinite sights and sounds as significant in their way as the hum of insects and the joyful flight and song of birds, give notice that the tension of a long winter is passed, that the tedious "*chez soi*" is at an end, and that Paris is awakening to pleasant outdoor life. Down on the quays you may watch the river darting swiftly through the arches, with waters bright, and green, and sparkling. Crafty old anglers are hobbling about down below, where the strand affords a footing, or perching themselves upon heaps of stones, or of fire-wood just landed from the

barges, and drop their lines cautiously into the swirling eddies. The steam-boats hurry by well filled with passengers, who read, or smoke, or ply the needle, while a gentle murmur of voices mingles with the clatter of the engines and the creaking of the primitive tiller. The cheerful shouts of children are heard in the public gardens, while the old people sun themselves on the benches. Chairs and tables cluster in thickening rows under the outside awnings of the cafés, and the shops are displaying their brightest and most tempting wares. Now open carriages begin to ply, and the daintiest and freshest of costumes, the most elaborate of chapeaux, to make their appearance. And all these signs and tokens of spring, and a hundred more, have a share in the same note of preparation. It is the spring-time of the year of the Exposition, of the year of fêtes and surprises, a year that is to be full of pleasure and profit, a year of truce amidst the pains and sacrifices of a time of doubt and expectation.

Surely the temple of Janus is closed, while the Champ de Mars is covered with the halls and galleries devoted to the service of art and industry. And here the work goes on merrily, notwithstanding fête or holiday. It is a city we behold, more extensive than many a famous city of old, which has risen like magic from its foundations; a city of public buildings, pavilions, palaces, and theatres. From the very brink of the river rise the buildings of the Exposition; they stretch for nearly three-quarters of a mile over the extent of the Champ de Mars, they are continued in a narrow line along the banks of the river, over the Quai d'Orsay for a mile, and again expanding in dimensions, are spread over the whole Esplanade des Invalides, an area of nearly half the dimensions of the Champ de Mars. And over all this vast extent of ground the note of preparation is incessant. There is no respite from the music of trowel, hammer, and saw; and the buildings, as they approach completion, have an air of solidity and even grandeur, as if they were meant to endure for centuries, instead of being destined to pass away with the leaves of autumn. As for the Eiffel Tower, did we not meet it on the Place de la Concorde just now, airing itself among the masks and mummers, and more applauded than any of them? Bon! for the Eiffel Tower.

But if we work hard in the morning, when the hour for *déjeuner* arrives then

away with the tools of our craft, whether pen or pencil, hammer or trowel, and assuming "costume de fête," let us adjourn for our café to the Boulevards. All Paris is upon the streets; you might walk upon the heads of the people all the way from the Madeleine to the Porte St. Martin. But there are a couple of chairs just vacant in our favourite corner, sheltered from the wind, which has still a chilly touch about it, and where the sunshine seems warmer and more pleasant. Where the coffee, too, retains some of the ancient "gout," for in this respect, alas! there is a sad falling off. It is only old-fashioned people who take their café, and the art of making it will soon be numbered among the lost.

And so the world defiles before us—the whole gay, shattering, brisk, animated world of the Boulevards—a world that only demands the pretence of shows and games, so satisfied is it with being able to talk, and laugh, and spread itself in the sunshine.

Gay sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
Pleased with thyself, whom all the world can please.

And yet not so easily pleased, perhaps, now, as when poor Oliver Goldsmith wandered by with flute and empty wallet, and perhaps more easily moved to scoffs and jeers than to enthusiasm.

Among the crowd that fills the roadway, a straggling line of carriages slowly defiles. Sometimes a gaily-decorated car arouses a tempest of shouts and cries. It is filled, perhaps, with a crew of jolly Blanchisseuses, who exchange gentle badinage with the crowd about them. Or it is a more solid vehicle, that carries Messieurs les Bouchers; or a van full of Pierrots, showering advertisements and repartees, more vigorous than refined, all about them. When anything excites a more than usual stir among the crowd, everybody jumps upon his or her chair to peer over the heads of the multitude. There are more "her chairs" than "his chairs" to-day in the chief cafés. Maman, and Belle-Maman, and Bébé are here in all force, with the laughing Norman nurse, who talks and enjoys herself more than anybody. There are more Bébés, and more Mamans, and more nurses. The Bébés fraternise among each other, and clutch at the silver-headed sticks and umbrellas of smiling messieurs. The women quarrel occasionally over the chairs. Here is one who claims to retain a seat, "pour son mari," whom the other politely insinuates to be a mythical character. But, indeed, there is no vacant

seat to be had all among the long rows of cafés and brasseries, where but yesterday was but a beggarly array of empty benches. "Yes, for the moment here is business pour 'casser la croûte,'" cries the panting manager, overwhelmed with orders, and almost unable to move among his crowd of customers.

At last the grande cavalcade appears, whose assembly we witnessed in the Place de la Concorde in the morning. It has been all round Paris, and is a little bit fatigued and dusty. The Marquises, Bergères à la Watteau, the Troubadours, or what not have disappeared—some of them driven off the field by the merciless storm of chaff that assailed them. And the "Ville de Paris," that great, gilt plaster figure on the triumphal car, has lost her head—not sacrificed to popular vengeance, but jolted off at some villainous crossing. But the trumpets still sound the fanfare; the collectors, with their tin jugs, and their false noses, still jocosely solicit the benevolences of the public. Alas! it is a public that laughs a good deal, but pays very little.

And so the scene goes on till far into the night, when still the lights glitter; the masks are more numerous; the public balls are in full swing; the theatres releasing crowded houses; the cries and "sifflements" more shrill and piercing. And on the morrow Paris awakes, not too early, but lively and vigorous as ever. Yes, it was a "beau jour," that of yesterday, but a nothing to what we shall see by-and-by.

DESERTERS.

SOMETHING like five thousand men desert every year from the British Army. There is a class of deserters by profession, who make a regular living by enlisting, deserting, and selling their kits. Cases are recorded where this has been done as often as seventeen times by the same individual.

It is only in comparatively recent years, however, that it has been possible to pursue this profitable business. By the Mutiny Act of 1858, it was enacted that "on the first and every subsequent conviction for desertion the court martial—in addition to any other punishment—may order the offender to be marked on the left side, two inches below the arm-pit, with the letter D; such letter not to be less than one inch long, and to be marked upon him with some ink or gunpowder, or other preparation, so as to

be visible and conspicuous, and not liable to be obliterated."

The designation of this process by the term "branding," which led many people to believe that the men were marked with a hot iron, had a good deal to do with the popular feeling against it, which ended in its being omitted from the Mutiny Act. Of course, while the regulation was in force, it was impossible for a man to enlist more than once without the authorities discovering his antecedents.

Pure and simple dislike to the service seems to be the common cause for desertion, but it is interesting to note the reasons given by deserters themselves for the extreme course they have adopted. The chaplain of a London prison some time ago made an attempt to find out from the six hundred and sixteen men confined there for desertion, the causes which had induced them to abandon the colours. Of this number, one hundred and sixty-one informed him that they had left the army because they fervently hated the life which they found themselves obliged to lead; one hundred and fourteen confessed that drink had been the cause of their misbehaviour; one hundred, that they had deserted "to better themselves;" seventy-two urged that they had allowed themselves to be influenced by the persuasions of bad companions; fifty-one had gone on the spree, had overstayed their leave, and had not been able to pluck up courage to return to their regiments, through fear of the consequences of their indiscretion; forty-eight had been so badgered by their comrades, or had found the treatment of the non-commissioned officers so harsh, that they had been driven to seek a refuge in flight; forty-one had absented themselves for some cause or other, and disclaimed any real intention of deserting; debt had driven sixteen to take the fatal step; a dozen had run away because leave had been refused them; and, finally, one had absconded because he had been foolish enough to get married without leave.

It is found that a large majority of deserters are men who have only served for a few months, and the real reason for the step is undoubtedly, in the case of most of these, a great disgust at finding the service very different in reality to the picture they had painted of it while listening to the cajolements of the recruiting sergeant, or reading highly-coloured stories of the joys of a soldier's life. The obligation to get through a certain amount of

work is terribly distasteful to some men, who belong to the lazy class of the community, and have usually enlisted because they thought a soldier's life meant sitting about in barracks and smoking, with just a little drill thrown in.

A very short sojourn with the colours serves to show them that this idea is a most erroneous one; and it becomes their chief care to discover some method by which they may escape the hard work and strict routine which are the soldier's lot. Purchase is the only legitimate way in which they can effect their release from surroundings that are so distasteful to them. But the chances are very small of such men having the requisite amount of money at their command, or of their being able to persuade relatives and friends to advance a sufficient sum.

The general impression amongst those upon whom they have any claim is sure to be that a little discipline and hard work will do them all the good in the world, and that, as they have joined the army with their eyes open, they must make the best of their bargain; and so there is nothing left for it but desertion. There are no particular difficulties in the way of the soldier who has made up his mind that he will run away from his regiment; and when such a man as we have been speaking of does run away, there is a very infinitesimal chance of his ever turning out a respectable member of society. He is either captured and brought back to undergo a term of imprisonment for his offence—in which case the chances are he will desert again as soon as an opportunity offers—or, finding that, without a character, he is unable to make a living in a civil capacity, he gives himself up, and spends the remainder of his term of service in a state of suppressed mutiny, only doing enough work to keep himself out of trouble. A few deserters, of course, escape detection; and of these a still smaller proportion may settle down to a steady life. It may, however, be taken as an axiom that a man who has so little principle as to run away from his duty, will never do much good in the world.

Discontent with the rations and disappointment at finding that, after the free kit with which he starts is worn out, he has to replace his articles of clothing out of his pay, are causes which seriously augment the disgust with which many young soldiers soon get to look upon their life.

Among deserters there is sure to be a

certain proportion of men who have always borne good characters in the regiments to which they belonged, and who would never have been suspected of any tendency towards running away from the life that apparently suited them so well. In all probability they would not themselves be able to assign any reason for the step. A sudden freak is the only cause that can be put forward in justification of their foolishness.

A small number of men desert because they fancy that they can do better in some other capacity. There is an amusing story told of one of this class, who suddenly and completely disappeared from the town in which his regiment was stationed. He was a silent man, who had always kept a great deal to himself, and who had been particularly noticeable for his habit of always going for walks alone, quite in opposition to the usual custom of men of his class. The first tidings his regiment heard of him was conveyed in a letter that the commanding officer received from a fashionable watering-place in Southern Europe. It came from a lady who signed herself Julia B——t, the surname being that of the missing man. This communication revealed the secret of his desertion, and of the solitary habits that had distinguished him.

It appeared that the wealthy widow of a builder in the neighbourhood had fallen in love with him, and that the two had got married, and had departed abroad for their honeymoon. The letter concluded by a formal tender of "my husband's" resignation.

In another case a soldier deserted, not to be married, but to escape that fate. The true story of his enlistment was never known to the authorities. All they did know was that one day a young woman of very determined aspect arrived at the barracks with sufficient money to obtain his purchase, giving out that she was his sweetheart, and that she had come to buy him out preparatory to their marriage. It was noticed that the swain did not seem to meet the advances of his lady-love with much ardour; but this was attributed to a natural shyness at finding himself in such a delicate position.

The negotiations for his discharge went smoothly; but on the very day that his papers were expected he disappeared, and the wrathful damsel, who found to her disgust that the money she had handed over was forfeited, had to do without the

husband she had been at such trouble and expense to secure.

It will, no doubt, occur to many readers of this article that a man who wished to desert would find an insuperable difficulty in his regimental attire, which would, of course, betray his identity wherever he went. But this difficulty is really non-existent, for in every garrison town there are men who will provide a soldier with a suit of ragged civilian garments in exchange for his regimentals and as much money as they can screw out of him.

It is needless to say that these persons find it well to exercise the utmost care that their transactions shall not become known to the authorities; and so cleverly do they hide all trace of their forbidden business, that it is very seldom that one of them renders himself liable to the term of two years' imprisonment, which is the punishment for aiding and abetting deserters.

WALPURGIS NIGHT AND MAY DAY.

WHAT would Dan Chaucer, or gentle Spencer think; what would Robin Hood and the men in green, or Queen Bess and her lively courtiers say; if they got leave to re-visit the earth, and spend a May Day with us in this last quarter of the nineteenth century? I fear they would go sulkily back to where they came from, early in the evening, making moan to one another that May Day is not what it was. And they would not be far wrong. The old birthday of Spring comes and goes for us unnoticed. According to the calendar, the vernal season begins on the twenty-first of March. The first of May has not received brevet rank as a bank-holiday, so there is neither reason nor leisure for those flourishes of trumpets, those brave processions, and goodly companies, those flowery garlands, that singing and dancing, with which our forefathers used to celebrate one of the merriest festivals of the year.

This omission of ours may be the cause of, or it may be caused by, the obvious fact that more often than not winter hangs about long after May has begun, and gives small opportunity for the developement of his eager successor's experiments on buds and blossoms. Anyhow, the Maypoles, the mummers, and the morris dancers have all slipped away out of sight and out of mind; they could not match their deliberate

steps to the speed of the march of progress. And the village folk, instead of gathering on the village green early on the first May morning to see how much jollification they can get through before the stars come out and send them in to bed, take third-class excursion tickets on Whit-Monday, spend three-quarters of their precious holiday in stuffy railway carriages, to test the doubtful pleasure of an hour or two in the noisy streets of London, or the almost as confusing scene of a favourite seaside resort, crowded with trippers.

Washington Irving, pleading for the observances of old customs and traditions, has well said, "that they tended to infuse poetical feelings into the common people, and to sweeten and to soften the rudeness of rustic manners without destroying their simplicity; indeed, it is to the decline of this happy simplicity that the falling away of these customs may be traced. The rural dances, the homely pageant, have gradually disappeared, in proportion as the peasantry have become expensive in their pleasures, artificial in their tastes, and too knowing for simple enjoyments."

If our English race had not spread itself east and west, north and south, assimilating so many conflicting elements with its capacious digestive powers, forgetting so much of its ancient, self-contained spirit in its ever-increasing thirst for new knowledge and new fields for action, perhaps our yeomen and peasantry might have remained as true to our old traditions as their Teuton far-off cousins in Saxony, Westphalia, and Bavaria; but as it is, we are rather proud of having forgotten the lore of our infancy; of having outgrown the garments of our youth; of having become men, and put away childish things.

In the nebulous days of those dread, mysterious despots, the Druids, the first of May was a national festival for the Celts of Britain and Gaul; while the Teuton worshippers of Thor kindled fresh altar fires in honour of Ostara, goddess of Spring, and their long processions wound, by torchlight, up the hills, singing and invoking her protection against the Jötans, the powers of darkness and malignant evil.

The centuries rolled the Druids' rites out of recollection; but the German festival gained a new and holier character from its association with the name of a saintly Anglo-Saxon princess, Walpurga, who left her father's house in England to carry to

those who dwell in the spiritual and moral darkness of the deep German forest a purer light for this world, and a better hope for the world to come. Against the witches and wild demons of the Urwald, to whom the German heathens owed a terrible allegiance, and acknowledged with hideous rites, Walpurga waged a lifelong warfare of prayer and exhortation; and when, after her death, she was canonised, her "works followed her," and she became the especial protectress against magic and witchcraft, and all the uncanny powers of the air; and on the first of May, the day set apart in her honour, it became a pious duty of the faithful to organise a general attack on the evil-spirit world. This crusade his Satanic Majesty, according to the legends, and conformably to the well-known perversity of his disposition, mocked and defied by holding annually, on that sacred midnight, high court for all witches and wizards on the Brocken, or as some say, on the Blockberg or the Staffelsstein.

So the festival has from time immemorial been kept with mixed feelings. The old Teuton carouse over the new birth of Nature has collected round itself a cluster of legends and superstitions drawn from these conflicting elements of light and darkness; and the superstitions and legends are so blent and tangled with the old mythological parables of good and evil, life and death, that they offer a fruitful field alike to poet, philologist, philosopher, and historian.

Foremost among those who have been attracted by the poetry of the double aspect of "Walpurgis Night," stand Goethe and Mendelssohn. Three times has Goethe woven the primitive allegory into the many-hued tissue of his poetry.

His "Erste Walpurgis Nacht" (First Walpurgis Night), which deals more directly than the other two with the vernal character of the theme, inspired his admirer, Mendelssohn, with the wonderfully appropriate music which he composed to illustrate the poet's conception. In this composition, which he himself calls a "Symphony-cantata," he has used all the resources of his art and genius to realise for us the Druidical incantations in their fierce intensity; the scarcely less gross fanaticism of the Christian appeals to Heaven to the All-Father to shield them from the attacks of the Evil One and his hordes of witches; the thronging crowd who go forth into the forest to welcome "laughing May," and to kindle expiatory

fires (the Christian continuation of the fires of Ostara) as types of the cleansing of their minds from doubt.

Goethe's "Second Walpurgis Night" is in the first part of the drama of "Faust"; it comprises the well-known Brocken scene and an interlude, wherein spirits, witches, weathercocks, wills-o'-the-wisp, and other miscellaneous eccentricities sing short, saucy stanzas to celebrate the golden wedding of Oberon and Titania.

In the third and last Walpurgis Night, which forms part of the second drama of "Faust," Goethe has allowed his Pegasus more than ordinary poetic licence. The scene is laid not in any of the recognised German infernal banquetting halls, but in the Phærean fields and on the slopes of Mount Peneus. Mephistopheles is there with his jibes and jeers; but the Faust is the lover of Helen of Troy, not of Marguerite; and the witches are represented by syrens such as tempted Ulysses; sphinxes, such as Edipus out-witched; and ants of colossal build.

But the savage legend of the North does not blend harmoniously with the voluptuous mythology of Greece; it is weird and fantastic; it does not strive after grace; it is, according to Carlyle, full of sincerity; and, as the sincerest of allegories, it has become, in popular superstition, highly realistic. The naked witches, riding on their broomsticks, to and from the Sabbath, have full power to work their wicked will on unwary creatures, biped and quadruped, of every genus and species. It is with unquestioning faith in these powers of evil that the peasants of Thuringia, Bavaria, Saxony, and Westphalia, avail themselves, on Walpurgis Eve, of all the precautions which tradition has handed down from generation to generation.

The prayers of the holy Abbess form no part of these defensive ceremonies. Those who desire to dwell in safety from "magic sleight, charms, and all beside," do something more demonstrative than praying; and the "faith that is in them" proves itself by a heterogeneous mass of works. With much noise and clamour they sally forth, as night falls, to nail up crosses and horseshoes on the doors of barn and stable, and to lay green sods on every threshold. Then the doors are securely fastened, so that the house-blessing may remain within. Ingress and egress are alike forbidden, for this mysterious benediction is so volatile and portable that it may escape in a moment if a wily evil-wisher, wish imper-

tunities for bread, salt, or a light, prevails on the inmates of the house to open to him; or it may be carried forth and lost on the wisp of straw which adheres to the milkmaid's petticoats as she leaves the cow-byre.

Besides the interest of these domestic precautions, there is occasionally the public excitement of hunting down and chastising with hazel switches—no mean substitute for the ancient torture-chamber—any one who may have gained, justly or unjustly, the undesirable reputation of being in league with the Evil One; meanwhile, those who are too old or too infirm to take an active part in the proceedings, sit in the chimney corner croning out uncanny stories of ghostly import, and anxiously counting the minutes until the hour of conflict shall have passed with the hour of midnight.

Neither are those typical fires yet extinct which the early Christians borrowed from the goddess Ostara. They are piled up, made fat for the burning, and kindled at night-fall along the narrow valleys like rivers of flame. Long processions, in quaint dresses, still march as their forefathers marched, carrying great torches to the tops of the hills, so that the light of Saint Walpurga's fires may fall far and wide, and fertilise the soil which is ready for seed-time.

But it is not by the peasantry alone, nor only with superstitious customs that the first of May is observed in Germany.

The present writer's experience is drawn from the festival as he once or twice helped to enjoy it at Leipzig. How simple, novel, and delightful that experience was to a mind whose memories of spring had become obscured by London smoke, I cannot say. Our waking up, on that well-remembered morning, in the sober old University town, was hastened by the knowledge that we had to be dressed by seven, in order to go with some kind friends to a Früh concert in some public gardens. Perhaps you shrug your shoulders, good reader, at this doubtful pleasure. You do not know unless you have tried it, how enjoyable it was to go and take one's place at a little table in the open air, to be served with a cup of hot coffee and an appetising roll and butter; to sit in the early sunshine and listen to the excellent orchestra discoursing music appropriate to the occasion. It was a naïve proceeding, no doubt, but charming to a mind which till then had realised nothing of May but the east wind.

After the concert we were joined by

other friends, and, leaving the city behind, we took our leisurely way to a certain village, where we were to meet the last and most important member of our party, the Professor, who was to be our host. There, about midday, we sat down to the plentiful repast of simple viands, which he had ordered. The Pfannkuchen particularly recur to my memory. How we enjoyed them after our long country walk! Nor must I forget the great bowl of Mai-trank, which we first compounded, and then drank to the last drop, with much clinking of tall green glasses, and many speeches, good, bad, and indifferent. What was added to the Rhine-wine to convert it into that ambrosial drink, I had better not divulge. It might sound less tempting than it really was.

In the evening, we drove back in time to hear a glorious performance of "Fidello" at the theatre; after which, supper at the Professor's, with more Mai-trank, and more hobnobbing concluded the day's proceedings, and we went to bed with the firm resolve that, wherever approaching Spring might find us another year, we would shake ourselves free from all encumbrances, strap on our traveller's wallet, take up our wanderer's staff, and reach the quaint, old-world Saxon-land in time to receive with due honours, and to enjoy with suitable simplicity, the first of May.

SHILLINGBURY SKETCHES.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

I SPENT my holiday last year in the neighbourhood of Shillingbury;* and, though it is an article of faith with me that a man should be very temperate and discriminating in the matter of visits to his birthplace, I found myself more than once treading my native soil, and gazing up at the window of the room in which I am fabled to have drawn my first breath, and sauntering about the roads where I had been taken for walks—how I hated walks in those days!—and trespassing on private property to find the thorn-bush in which I had rifled my first bird's-nest, and the ditch in which I had salled my toy ships and got wet feet, and subsequent coughs and colds. The thorn-bush was clean gone, and the ditch seemed to have grown very narrow. It still abounded with water-cresses, however, and I called to mind

certain days when I had taken, on its banks, *al fresco* meals of bread and butter, supplemented by the cresses drawn straight from their oozy bed.

Change was everywhere visible in the physical features of the place. An uncompromising brick wall now prevented little boys from falling into the mill-dam, whereas, in my time, a ragged old wooden fence gave free admission to the youth of the place. A new Wesleyan chapel stood on part of the garden, which was once Mr. Outler Bridgeman's; and Jonas Harper's house had been enlarged and converted into the premises of the Shillingbury Coffee Tavern Company, Limited. In spite of the above-named, and many other revolutions, I still found that Shillingbury itself was less changed for me than the inhabitants thereof. I cannot say, however, that this discovery raised up in my breast those emotions of wonder and regret in which persons of a sentimental turn are wont to indulge, when they make the discovery that the world has declined to stand still for twenty years or so for their especial benefit. I found that quite half of the people, who were to the fore in my youth, were dead and buried. This may have been a matter of regret to me; but there was no reason why I should be astonished at a phenomenon so strictly in accord with the relentless spirit of Nature in dealing with mankind. A large proportion of those who survived were people I neither knew nor cared for; and, after deducting these, I found that the residue had, for the most part, either clean forgotten me, or ceased to take any interest in me and my doings.

On the day of my last visit, I called on certain of the tradesmen yet surviving, with whom my family had formerly had dealings, and in no case did any one of them seem conscious that I was doing any honour by my visit. Mr. Robbins, the grocer, draper, and general warehouseman, was condescendingly familiar, and there ran through his discourse a vein of satire against people who did not spend their money amongst their own people. I curtailed my visit, as Mr. Robbins's remarks were becoming manifestly personal, and went on to Mrs. Mallowa, at the Berlin wool warehouse and fancy repository. This good lady seemed to think that it showed a conceited, stuck-up disposition for any one to leave his birthplace in search of fortune; but the same rule, apparently, did not apply to the case of her own son,

* See "ALL THE YEAR ROUND," New Series, Nos. 736 to 863.

who, in her own words, "had got a situation in one of the first dentist's establishments in London, and pulled out the teeth of Earls, and Lords, and nobody knows who, every day of the week."

I made a few more calls after this; but in every case I found that friendly appreciation was a very scarce article in Shillingbury, so I went to take my lunch in the commercial room of the "Black Bull;" and when I had dispatched my rather dismal meal, I looked out of the window to watch the movements of a stout gentleman in a low-crowned hat and drab cloth gaiters, who was making a circuit of the market-place. First, he halted at Mr. Ribstone the butcher's shop, and held a long colloquy with the master of the establishment, poking his forefinger, with the air of an expert, into the yellow fat of a side of beef, emphasizing his remarks—probably critical—by bringing down his iron-shod stick with a sounding thump on the pavement, and settling the dispute—for, from his argumentative carriage, I was sure there had been one—by letting off a bellow of laughter, in the midst of which he walked away. Then he went to Mr. Tawner's, the saddler; and Mr. Tawner, a stand-off sort of a man as a rule, touched his cap and came to the door, and stood talking as long as it seemed good to the stout gentleman to darken his doorway. Then he intercepted Dan Curtis, the bill-poster, in the middle of his work, and if Dan had been in the presence of the Prince of Wales he could not have been more cringingly polite. Old women, bringing in eggs and fowls for sale, bobbed the most respectful of curtsies, as they passed; and the hearty greeting which came from young Sir Francis Kedgbury, as he drove through the town to catch the train, did not elicit from the stout gentleman anything more respectful in the way of a return salute than a sort of "I'm as good a man as you" kind of nod. Then he came across to the "Black Bull," and walked boldly into the bar-parlour—a sanctum into which I should have no more thought of intruding, than into the Rector's study—and called for a glass of mild ale.

"It's a fine day, isn't it, Mr. Gay?" said the landlady, with a deferential accent. Her manner to me, in talking over old times, had been quite as familiar as any thing I have before described.

"Pretty tidy, pretty tidy," said the stout gentleman, between his sips of ale.

"You've got a stranger in the Commercial, I see. What line is he in?"

The landlady's reply was inaudible to me. The stout gentleman gave a contemptuous grunt at it, whatever it was, and tramped out of the house, after he had finished his ale.

"Mr. Gay," I said to myself, as I watched his departing figure. "Gay. Who can he be? There used to be a little cattle-dealer named Gay living down at Brooksbank End, and a son of his, a dirty little cad in inky, patched corduroy trousers, came as a free-boy to the Grammar School some time before I left. He had red hair, and the stout gentleman who had just gone out was auburn in complexion, and with a alight cast in his eye as well. It was the same with Gay, junior. One of his eyes, I remember, used to wander about in a most undisciplined manner, and a contumelious epithet was habitually assigned to him on account of this visual peculiarity. I called to mind, likewise, that I had once cut Gay, junior, across the shins with a hockey stick, and I hoped that Mr. Gay might forget this circumstance in the event of our meeting. He was five feet ten in height, broad-shouldered, and with a fist like a leg of mutton.

As soon as he was well clear of the premises, I took the opportunity of accosting the landlady, who was standing by the door, and of leading the conversation up to the subject of the stout gentleman.

"Why, you must know him," she said. "Mr. Joshua Gay. He's often runnin' up to London and about the country, so I should ha' thought as you might ha' come across him. But he's a busy man hisself, and, I dare say, have forgot all about you."

"Do you mean that he is the son of the cattle-dealer who used to live at Brooksbank End?"

"O' course he is; son o' Barker Gay, as they used to call him. He was a 'maxin' dull boy at school, as I've heard talk, and he ain't much of a scholar now; but he have got on in the world, for all that."

Then the landlady went on to give me an account of the rise and progress of Mr. Joshua Gay. Mr. Gay, senior, had not dealt judiciously in cattle, and had, in consequence, died insolvent; and at his death his son was reduced to the necessity of living by his wits—a method of bread-winning which, even in Arcadia, seldom fosters a high standard of integrity. Mr. Gay, junior, at one time sank so low as to follow the calling of a cattle-drover;

but, by hook or by crook, he managed to scrape a little money together, and then set up for himself as a fowl-dealer. Then he rose to pigs, and finally to sheep and oxen.

"But," said the landlady, "he never did nothin' o' no account till he got in with young Mr. Suttaby o' Hedgeland. That was a lucky day for Jos Gay, that waa."

From the landlady's manner while she was speaking of Mr. Gay's early struggles, I did not gather any sign to indicate that his system of business had been anything but that of an honest man; but when she came to speak of his "getting in" with my old friend, Arthur Suttaby, a certain inflection of her voice, a certain knowing look in her eye, seemed to proclaim that, in her opinion, the move by which Mr. Jos Gay laid the foundation of his fortunes was one of those strokes which one naturally expects from practitioners who have opened their career by picking up a living by their wits.

"Ab, poor Mr. Suttaby!" the landlady went on, "he never was much of a man o' business. He had a craze, when he was a young fellow, to be a lawyer's clerk, or something o' that sort, same as you are, and he never took to farmin' with a heart; and his wife, Lord ha' mercy upon us! what could a man, as ha' got a farmhouse to look after, want with a wife from London? Poor and proud, that's about her style; and she ha' made her husband poor enough, too; and 'tis no fault of hers if he ain't too proud to look at any of his old friends. He 'pear to be stand-off like, when she's by, but when he come in here sometimes, he's just as friendly like as ever he was; but he's right melancholy now-days, and begin to look quite the old man, as old as you do, though he must be four years, or more, younger."

"You are within a little," I said, smiling at the good lady's candour; "but what has his melancholy to do with Mr. Joshua Gay?"

"I'll tell you, if you let me go on. Well, Mrs. Suttaby must have it, as it was low and ungenteel like for a man in her husband's place to go to market and buy his sheep and bullocks, like other farmers, so he must needs go to a dealin' man to send his sheep and bullocks in; and then, when they was fatted, the dealin' man must come into his yard and buy 'em, so as Mr. Suttaby needn't soil his boots w' goin' to market. Well, little as you know about business, you must see as a man goin' on like this would always buy in the dearest market and sell in the cheapest.

Old John Rickman did his business for a bit; but after he broke his neck, comin' away from the railway station drunk one night, Jos Gay got his foot in, and he ha' planted it firmer and firmer every year, till now folks say as all the stock belong to him and not to Mr. Suttaby. Jos ha' got a long head, and no mistake."

"But," I said, "supposing that Mr. Gay is a fair-dealing man, I don't see why Mr. Suttaby should suffer. Mr. Gay seems very much respected in the place, so I conclude he is to be trusted."

"I dare say," replied the landlady; "but if I had a cow to sell to him, I'd sell it by my own valuation, and not by his, as he persuade Mr. Suttaby to do. He goes and pitch a lot o' tales about the trade bein' bad, and generally gets the stock at his own price. As to his bein' respected in the place, why the fact is, that he ha' got a lot o' 'em under his thumb, and that make folks civil and polite, you know; but, Lord ha' mercy! here's Mr. Gay a comin' back after something." And here the landlady waddled out into the market-place to greet the great man, and her demeanour was so servile and deferential, that I could not help suspecting that she herself might be amongst the many she had just spoken of as being accustomed to feel the pressure of Mr. Joshua Gay's thumb.

I sought again the seclusion of the commercial room, for the discourse I had just listened to did not make me very keen to renew Mr. Gay's acquaintance. The few minutes' talk I had just held with the good landlady had, moreover, given me much food for reflection.

I had left Shillingbury, which then contained many good friends of mine, when I was about twenty years of age. It was a sleepy-headed place enough, and fate had decreed that I should seek my bread in the great city. I did not exactly expect, like the countryman of the story, that I should find the streets paved with gold; but I certainly did figure to myself a round of delight in the mere life of the streets: the hurrying crowds, and the blazing gas lamps, and the brilliant shops. Perhaps, when I came face to face with it all, I was a trifle disappointed; but still the spell of the great city mastered me, and I became as devoted a Londoner as Charles Lamb. I always thought with pity—and just a little contempt—of my less fortunate fellow-townsmen, who were fated to live on in the humdrum round of Shillingbury

life. I did not in any way forget them ; but, whenever I did call their existence back to memory, I always imagined them as taking the deepest interest in me and my doings. Often I longed to have some one or other of them with me for a day or so, in order that I might dazzle him or her with a glimpse of my success and of my knowledge of the world. Walter Tafnell was older than I was, and used to pose down at Shillingbury as a man who knew his way about ; but I felt pretty confident that I could show him phases of life which would — metaphorically — make his hair stand on end ; and I should have liked to take Jonas Harper, who was at that time organist, to a promenade concert. Poor Jonas had a streak of genius in that drink-muddled brain of his ; and, if I could have kept him away from the refreshment-bar, the music would have fallen on no ears more appreciative than his. Miss Dalgairns I had always loved, in spite of her stern humour, and I would have sat out with her the longest May Meeting ; and I would have searched London through with Mrs. Cutler Bridgeman in quest of the most advanced exponent of the Ritualistic school of the Anglican Church. But if I could have lured good old Simon Deverel, of Cobb Hall Farm, up to the Cattle Show, and have taken him for a walk some afternoon, when he had had enough of fat oxen and pigs, when the shops were ablaze with light and the streets thronged, I should have liked it better than all.

Thus it will be seen that I have not been oblivious of Shillingbury amid the roar and stress of London. As I lighted a cigar and tried to feel at ease in my inn, sitting on the hard, slippery, horsehair sofa, I began to meditate on my recent talk with the landlady, and the manner with which the few people, who still remembered my youth in Shillingbury, had received me when I had presented myself to their notice. Alas ! there was but one conclusion to be reached — Shillingbury had troubled itself very little about me and my rise and progress.

As I sat looking at the landlady, while she received Mr. Joshua Gay's orders about some matter of business, fawning and smiling as if he had been a lord of the soil, I could not help regretting that I had not turned my steps elsewhere than in the direction of my birthplace. Yes, however distasteful it might be to confess it, there was no blinking the fact that I was, in the sight of Shillingbury, a mere nobody when com-

pared with the rascally cattle-dealer, whom I had more than once thrashed at school as a dirty little sneak.

Mr. Joshua, however, had got houses and land, and money in the bank ; and, besides these, flocks and herds, which were now eating my poor friend Suttaby's hay and turnips at less cost, I feared, than these vegetables cost to produce. Mr. Gay had conquered, and had mounted a pedestal, and become an image for local worship and respect.

And this, too, in a corner of Arcadia the least transformed by the sinister forces of town life ; one of those spots which are supposed to contain all the civic virtue yet left to us ; to which the contemporary social reformers want to lead back the superfluous ones who persist in sticking to the pavement of Babylon. Doctrinaires of both sexes had preached to me so persistently the gospel, that a man who just keeps body and soul together by cultivating cabbages in the country, must be a higher, nobler being than the man who picks up a sufficient living by transporting cabbages in Covent Garden, that I had got to believe them, and to look upon London as the special home of fraud and duplicity. But the history of Mr. Joshua Gay's rise in the world had opened my eyes.

Rustic virtue, forsooth ! another illusion gone. I was in a very sombre and, I fear, cynical mood as I turned my back that day on Shillingbury. I believe I even went so far as to compose a letter to my bankers, directing them at once to cease payment of all annual subscriptions to the charitable institutions of my birthplace. Shillingbury could, apparently, get on without me ; therefore, she might buy her own blankets and her own soup in the winter, and provide herself with literary and scientific recreation at the Athenæum, an institution which my money had helped to found, and which still subsisted partially on my annual subscription. The recollection of this institution added fuel to the flame of my wrath, for this reason. The young men belonging to it were always mutually improving themselves—reading papers on the "National Drink Bill," "Emigration," "Bi-metallism," "England a Hundred Years Ago," and other such subjects, and indulging in a regular debate afterwards ; but, though the secretary must have known that I was in the neighbourhood, he never deigned to ask me, a benefactor, and—though I say it myself—more of a citizen of the world than the average Shillingbury shop-boy, to read a paper, or even to be

present at a debate. I was kept fully aware of the society's existence by the receipt of the annual report, which, in addition to giving an account of the work done in the past year, would invariably call attention to certain extraordinary calls on the funds. One year the rain came in and broke down the ceiling; another saw the total collapse of the iron railings in front, put up originally by Mr. Grimes, ironmonger, a respected townsman, and brother-in-law of Mr. Joshua Gay; and the cocoa-nut matting seemed to be but as brown paper under the hobnails of the self-improvers. The committee came to me readily enough when they wanted money; but my services as a teacher they never enlisted. More than once, as I conscientiously thought over my duties to my birthplace, I had arranged the heads of a lecture to be delivered at the Athenæum; and here I was "severely let alone" by these know-nothings, who preferred to listen to each other's drivel, rather than to the ripe experience of one like myself!

But the mellowing influence of a good dinner and a night's rest, such as I seldom get in town, drew my spirits into a milder mood. The how, and the why, and the wherefore of the whole matter became clear to me as I smoked my after-breakfast pipe under the chestnut in my host's garden the next morning. In the chastened frame of mind induced by tobacco, I saw that, in turning up its nose at me and at my lecturing, Shillingbury was merely standing on its own dignity, and relying on its own resources. I, forsooth, had found Shillingbury a theatre not wide enough for my abilities, and had turned my back on the place which had been good enough for my forefathers, and had gone away to spend and be spent in the place which I was pleased to term the centre of civilisation. No doubt I thought myself a very fine fellow, and vastly condescending to offer to lecture to the mutually-improved young men on this subject and on that. Very likely I was right in my estimate. Shillingbury, however, had its own opinion on the matter, and had, moreover, plenty of young men who had been constant to their birthplace, and who were quite equal, after spending a week in company with an Encyclopædia, to the task of enlightening their brethren on any subject of current interest from the Athenæum platform.

Again, when I considered the fact that,

at the present moment in Shillingbury, Mr. Joshua Gay was somebody while I was nobody, I found that the good people down there had simply fallen under the spell of that power which compels us all nowadays—country mice and town mice as well—to hold to this and to abjure that: the power of the advertisement. They thought much of Mr. Gay and little of me, for the same reason which induces thousands of men every morning to wash their faces and secure their trousers with particular soaps and braces, the excellencies of which are brazened forth from every hoarding, in preference to other unknown and probably just as trustworthy wares; for the same reason which sends London playgoers in droves to admire the acting of any woman who has managed to get the world to talk about her as eminently beautiful or eminently pious, though she may move like a marionette and speak like a raven with a bad cold. The soap maker, and the braces maker, and the theatrical man of business, are past masters in the art of advertising. The virtues of their several specialties are kept steadily before the eyes of the British Public; and the British Public, though it may harden its heart for a time, always lays down its dollars in the end. Mr. Joshua Gay had been looming large before the eyes of Shillingbury for the last dozen years, while I had been sitting on a high stool in a London attorney's office. The good people down there had enjoyed constant sight of Mr. Gay's corpulent form and countenance, and the sound of his ringing voice, and, what was more to the point, of the rattle of the money in his breech-pockets as he swaggered round the market-place and out and in the "Black Ball"; but I was far removed from their eyesight, and the scratching of my pen in *Bayly's Buildings* was inaudible to their sense of hearing. They were even unaffected by an article of mine which appeared in the "Reviver," a publication which existed after giving seventeen numbers to the world, and by my elegant verses in the columns of a society paper, the title of which I refrain from giving. "The world are always in the wrong," says the old proverb. "Out of sight, out of mind," is our own enunciation of a truth, the force of which I had never so completely realised as when I pondered over the experiences of my last visit to my birthplace.

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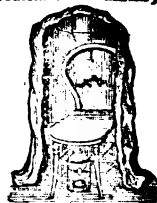
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YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round & Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

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SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1889.

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LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER V. DUMPHIE'S VISIT.

"BOOKS, books, books ; my dear Draycott, what a fellow you are for books !"

Dumphie is sauntering along the lengths of my dwarf book-cases, running his finger down the edges of the shelves as he reads the titles on the bindings. He has a pipe in his mouth. He looks thoroughly comfortable and at home. Every now and again he takes down a book to turn over a leaf or two ; then takes the stem of briar-wood from between his teeth, and remarks upon what he has seen.

"Yes," I answer. "You are right about my love of books. I have reason to love them. They have been my companions often—when I had no other."

"I, too, used to be a great book-lover once," says Dumphie, with a sigh. "I am still—in a sort of a way. I have some old, dry, mathematical things that I am very tender over. I used to fancy I had it in me to become a mathematical genius once. I'm not sure that I hadn't an idea in the dim and visionary distance of being a Senior Wrangler ; of giving up the service for which I seemed then destined, and turning College don. We all have such glorious fancies at one time or other."

"Perhaps it was no fancy."

"You mean a dream that might have become a reality ?"

"Yes ; that, square forehead of yours seems to indicate such a probability."

"Well, well, the turn for figures stands me in good stead at our place in the City ; for you see everything changed all at once."

"You mean that God took the books you loved out of your hands, and showed you a 'more excellent way'—the way of the man who, taking his life in his hand, gives it to others, instead of grasping it for himself ?"

Dumphie was silent a moment or two, still fingering the books. I fancy that, if he had turned round, I should have seen his eyes suffused with a brightness strange to them. He did not seem startled at any knowledge of his life implied by my words. Perhaps he did not notice it. He seemed dreamy to night—full of thoughts and memories of the past.

"When I gave up the others," he says, presently, "there was one thing I stuck to, and that was German. I found I had time to read after I got home from the counting-house ; and when Mazie was old enough, I set about teaching her. To know German is like having in your possession the key to untold treasures. There is no country with such a literature as Germany. Mazie could read 'Ondine' when she was twelve years old, and used to say she thought the poplar-tree waving about opposite yon dormer windows was like the 'Nickenden Mann.'"

"I noticed a volume of Schiller on her table the other day. I ventured to open it, and found it scored by pencil-marks as my own books are."

Dumphie has his back to me, and a volume of Carlyle in his hand. He hardly seems to have heard my last comment. He turns and looks at me intently. He has very bright, slightly prominent eyes, and is apt to concentrate them upon a given subject with a grave intentness that would, methinks, be hard to meet if you had anything to keep back.

"It has often struck me," says Dumphie, "that, before you knew us, you must have led a lonely kind of life."

"I did."

"And you found in work—hard work and plenty of it—what others find in sympathy and companionship?"

"Yes, work has been to me—salvation."

"And we—what have we been to you?"

"Light and life."

I hear the thrill in my own voice that comes, whether I will or no, with the utterance of those two words.

"I am glad that we have been so much to you. I am more glad than I can say—"

He turns over the leaves of the book in his hand; then he sits down in the old easy-chair opposite me, and we both fall into silence, the smoke from his pipe, and the smoke from mine, gently ascending in rings of pale, grey mist. Men, when in conversation, are more given, I think, to intervals of silence than women. I am the one to break this silence:

"To hold a book you want to read, in one hand, and a paper-knife in the other, always seems to me like getting a friend all to yourself. It is a delightful sensation."

But my companion evidently answers to a train of thought of his own, not to my words:

"And the work that has been salvation to you, is your work there?" with a motion of his hand towards the prison.

"Yes; there is no better work than having to minister to others, it leaves you no time to minister to yourself."

"You have learnt a great deal from it—your prison work, I mean?"

"Yes—to pity and forgive. It has helped me to enter more into what I feel must be the mind of God towards the wrong-doing in the world."

"You mean that it has taught you the true meaning of the words: 'God is Love'?"

"I mean that in the very worst, the very lowest, the most degraded, I have never failed to find some trace of good. I mean that it has taught me how much devil-worship there is in the world, going about under the guise of religion; how much so-called religion, that has no more likeness to 'the mind of God, or the truth as it is in Jesus,' than a man stricken with some dire disease has to whole and healthy humanity."

It is a new happiness to me, speaking

out so freely all the thoughts that in me lie. For how long a while back they have spoken only through those pencillings and markings that have caught Dumphie's fancy so much to-night!

Silence again. This time broken by Dumphie.

"Draycott, I wish you had known my father. I should have said Mazie's father"—this with some signs of agitation—"I mean Colonel Birt."

"I know whom you mean. I wish I had known him."

"I always feel to owe him so much. It might almost be as if in some strange and subtle way we had all of us inherited something of his nature—we boys, who were nothing to him by any tie of blood, only by the tenderest, truest tie of love. I was nothing but a little chap, comparatively speaking, when he went on active service again, after my mother's death; and yet the thought of him has stayed with me all my life, and helped me, and made things easy."

I dared not say I understood; I dared not betray Aunt Dacie's chatterings by the firelight; I dared not let him see that I could read between the lines.

Dumphie's eyes were gazing dreamily at the fire; his pipe lay on the mantelshelf—he had forgotten that, and everything else beside, save the past, to which his thoughts had wandered.

"And yet he was not a clever man—a simple soul, a brave soldier, looking at everything in life in such a simple way, seeing just the wrong and the right, and always choosing the right. I think his heart broke when my mother died; not that he was less thoughtful for us, less readily interested in all about us, our little troubles, and our little joys; but yet he was all things with a difference. An awe of this sorrow of his grew upon me. I used to sit beside his knee, and hold his hand and stroke it, not speaking all the time. He would sometimes carry Mazie—such a little, golden-haired darling as she was!—up and down the room, bending his face close over hers, and saying over and over again: 'My little girl, my little Mazie, with the mother's eyes!' That was quite true. It is quite true now. Mazie is just like mother, only more fragile-looking. Children can remember more than we think. I remember them taking me in to see her when she was dying. I remember trying hard not to cry, lest she should be sorry because of my being so sorry. I can

remember it, as if it was yesterday. But—do I weary you with all this?”

“No, no; tell me more of those past days.”

I spoke calmly. I sat quite still, looking as rugged and hard-featured, I doubt not, as in that celebrated picture done by Hasledean of Corpus; but I was drinking in eagerly every word Dumphie spoke. I had much ado to refrain my lips from echoing that cry of love: “My little girl, my little girl!”

“I remember so well,” continued Dumphie, with a little well-pleased smile at my interest in these reminiscences of his, “how, after my dear mother’s death, we boys all took up our abode in Prospect Place, quite as a matter of course, you know. Fortunately, it is nearly twice the size of all the other houses, and has two big, low rooms at the top—attics I suppose one should call them—with dormer windows built in the roof. So we managed very well; and Aunt Charlotte, a sister of Miss Birt’s, who died afterwards, made everything so pleasant, and really spoiled Glennie to such a lamentable extent, that we all settled down as contentedly as pigeons in a cote. Everything was done for us, as I said before, just as a matter of course; exactly the same as though we were Colonel Birt’s own sons. His income went to keep us in comfort, each and all of us, share and share alike, also as a matter of course. Then, quite suddenly, something went wrong. He had saved money and invested it. He was no man of business; only a simple soul, too honest to suspect others. He had relied upon the counsel of a seeming friend, and now—the savings were gone. There was no murmuring. He told me that he had let sorrow make him indolent and selfish; though Heaven knows no man ever led a more selfless life. He said this blow had been sent to stir him up to action again; that we were growing ‘big boys,’ and that our education must be thought of. The few thousands my mother possessed in her own right he had had tied down upon us; but the income they brought in was very small. He had set his mind upon our being educated in the best manner. I was to go in for the Royal Engineers; the twins for the Navy; Glennie must be a soldier, too; he was so fond of fighting and getting up battles with his countless boxes of tin soldiers. All this was to prepare me for the fact that he was going back to Indian service. There were stormy symptoms in

the East, just then. They were glad to get good—he called it ‘seasoned’—men. Papa Birt—we used to call him that—had applied for an appointment, and got it. He was going now, at once. I loved him passionately. The iron entered into my young soul as he spoke. A month later he was gone. Aunt Charlotte had nearly fallen back into her old invalid ways from continual weeping. Aunt Dacie had no eyes left to speak of; and poor old Kezia used to sit half her time behind the scullery door, with her apron over her head.”

“An odd habit that,” I put in casually.

“Oh! you know about it, do you?” says Dumphie, with a slightly startled air.

“Yes; Aunt Dacie—Miss Birt—mentioned it to me.”

He hesitates a moment, looking at me intently, then goes on with his story:

“The parting had been terrible—a thing never to be forgotten. The Colonel gathered us young ones about him; his arms seemed to clasp and hold us every one. The tears were running down his face. I never saw it again. I am not likely to forget it. ‘Little children,’ he said, ‘love one another.’”

We were both silent for a moment; and when Dumphie spoke again he was a thought husky. I should have been the same had I tried to say anything; but I only pulled at my pipe, and stared at the fire.

“He spoke to all of us; but yet—I felt in all my aching, childish heart, most of all to me. He would fain say to me, the eldest of the little flock, ‘love them, guard them, tend them. I give them into your keeping—I, who may never again see one of these dear faces.’ We had to loosen Mazie’s hands from his coat-collar at last, and I held her—it was not an easy job—while he drove off.”

Thoughts had been running riot in my heart as I had listened to the story which I now am trying to set down here from memory, fearing all the time that I am hardly doing justice to the quaint and simple pathos of Dumphie’s words. It has made me very happy that he should speak so openly to me. I knew that it must mean I held some place in his good opinion, for men are chary of laying bare to each other such sacred phases of life as these that he has told to me; and yet I am wondering if under his words there lurks some subtle meaning! I wonder if Dumphie, Mazie’s brother, the man to whose sacred guardianship Colonel Birt

bequeathed this child of his love, is warning me? Has he read, with those true, searching eyes of his, the story of the past months; read it as clearly as though he had looked over my shoulder as I set it down here, line by line, and day by day? Do I seem too gnarled and rugged a tree to have so fair and fragile a flower wind its loving arms about me, filling my life with sweetness? Is it because he thinks my case a hopeless one that Dumphie is so open and candid with me to-night? Did he not say, or rather did not Aunt Dacie say for him this morning, that he "wanted to talk to me about something"? Is the record of these tender memories a softening to me—as he hopes—of the bitter gall and wormwood that is in store?

I have never been a patient man. What patience I possess is acquired, not natural. I resolve to rush upon fate.

"What you tell me, Macgregor, of these early days of yours, makes me understand thoroughly how it was you felt that you must just give up everything, and be 'Papa Birt' to the rest, when your father—when Colonel Birt died."

What a treat is Dumphie's face, as he turns it full upon me in the firelight!

"Give up everything—be 'Papa Birt' to the lads!" he says. "Why, Draycott, who has been telling you? How do you know?"

"Aunt Dacie told me," I say, with amazing coolness, slowly drawing the tobacco-pouch to my hand, and preparing to refill. "She told me a great many more things beside. She and I have grown to be great friends, you see. She told me how, after the Colonel was gone, the parrot would keep calling out: 'Papa Birt, Papa Birt—where is Papa Birt!'"

"She told you all that?"

"Oh, yes, and much more beside. I don't think that ever any one told me so many things in my life as Aunt Dacie has done."

I kept an eye upon Dumphie, to see if he winces at my familiar mention of Miss Birt. But not a bit of it.

He is on his legs in a moment, and has me by both hands, so that a lot of my best Cavendish is scattered to the winds of heaven.

"Upon my word, Draycott," he says, "I am delighted to hear all this. I am delighted to find you have got on so well with Aunt Dacie, you know—are on such mighty confidential terms with her, you know! It smooths the way; it

makes it quite an easy kind of thing to introduce the subject I came here to talk over with you to-night—it does, indeed!"

The dear fellow's face is one glow of satisfaction—it looks so good, so honest, so very much in earnest, that I feel to the bottom of my soul that if ever it came to having to go against Dumphie, the task would be a bitter one indeed.

Here is George to say I am wanted in the prison. So good-bye to further gossiping to-night.

To-morrow's record must tell of Dumphie's errand.

SIR FRANCIS CHANTREY AND HIS BEQUEST.

ANNUALLY, at the Royal Academy Exhibition of pictures, in Burlington House, we see attached to a certain number of paintings and works of sculpture: "Bought under the terms of the Chantrey bequest."

In like manner we observe, in one of the galleries of the South Kensington Museum, a collection of such works of art, "Lent by the President and Council of the Royal Academy;" to which are appended the notice of my first sentence.

This Chantrey bequest—what is it? And Chantrey? Well, every one knows that he was a sculptor; but few, probably, are aware of many of the details of his life and work; of how he struggled and rose; of how he left to the world of Art a legacy of such munificence as does not often fall to its share.

The study of his career should be not only instructive, but highly encouraging to the youthful artist, who is possessed of talent, but is impatient of that steady, ceaseless work, without which he may never reach the goal of his high aspirations.

This is the record of his life.

Francis Chantrey was born at Norton, a village in Derbyshire, not far from Sheffield, in the year 1781. Of the lad's youth, little is told. His father owned and cultivated a small property, but died when the child was only eight years of age; and, the widow marrying again, young Chantrey's future fell into the hands of friends, who determined that he should become a solicitor. But this decree was immensely distasteful to the youth, who from his earliest days had liked nothing better than drawing and modelling. Thus, to please

him, it was arranged that he should be apprenticed to a carver and gilder of Sheffield. With this man Chantrey found opportunities of learning to paint and to mould, as well as to carve; and, ultimately, deciding upon modelling as his future work in life, and upon London as the scene of it, he left the Sheffield carver and gilder six months before the time of his apprenticeship was expired—a privilege for which he paid fifty pounds—and entered upon his labour.

For eight years he worked steadily and faithfully, and five pounds sterling was the amount by which his pocket was enriched during that period.

His first imaginative creation was a head of Satan, exhibited in the Royal Academy in the year 1808; his first—at any rate important—order, a marble monument erected by the people of Sheffield to the memory of their Vicar, the Rev. J. Wilkinson.

The skill and fidelity with which this order was carried out brought Chantrey's name into prominence as a young and rising artist; and the next thing we read of him renders the assurance of his future an accomplished fact. Nor, once on the high-road to fortune and fame, did he ever look back, as old nursery books say, but travelled on to the end of the journey a thoroughly successful man.

An order for four colossal busts of Admirals Duncan, Howe, Vincent, and Nelson, for Greenwich Hospital, represented the outcome of his spirited work at Sheffield.

To the ready wit of Horne Tooke, who recognised in the young sculptor talent, hard work, and perseverance, Chantrey had much to be grateful for. This remarkable personage, then residing at Wimbledon, took a fancy to Chantrey, allowed him to model a bust of himself, was charmed with it, and introduced the sculptor to many influential and wealthy friends. One strange order Tooke gave the young man—an order to procure a fine slab of black marble to be placed above him where he lay, as he had elected to lie in death, in a tomb in his own garden at Wimbledon.

"Well, Chantrey," said he, the day the marble was delivered, "now that you have sent my tombstone, I shall live a year longer."

And this proved to be the case. But Basing Churchyard, instead of the garden at Wimbledon, was Horne Tooke's final resting-place.

In 1811 Chantrey married his cousin, Miss Wale, a lady possessed of a nice fortune. The newly-wedded pair settled in a house of ample size and convenience; and Chantrey, free from the grinding circumstances of poverty, pursued his labour under the most advantageous auspices.

The year following his marriage he completed a statue of King George the Third for the Guildhall; and a monument to the memory of the daughter of Mr. Johns, of Hafod, which was exhibited in Spring Gardens, as it was found to be too large for the Academy. Chantrey was now considered the first sculptor of the day, and received very numerous orders, in the execution of which his fame became strengthened.

As his chief works at this time, may be cited a bust of the King, one of Lady Gertrude Sloane, and others of Professor Playfair, the Marquis of Anglesea, Sir Joseph Banks, and Earl Saint Vincent.

In manner, Chantrey was frank and unceremonious; in character and in work, thoroughly honest. Possessed of a very jocular spirit, he enjoyed a bit of fun as well as any one; but his affection for a practical joke never led him to say or do anything to annoy or vex. His generosity was so great that his discrimination suffered; he never lost an opportunity of helping one less fortunate than himself, but was so impulsive that not unfrequently he was deceived, and bestowed aid upon those who imposed upon his kindness.

The most marked characteristic of his style, as of his life, was simplicity. "His works," says his faithful chronicler, "are free from any extraneous ornament, and he rejected everything that called the attention from the simple dignity of the subject represented."

His busts are true likenesses, not idealisms. In his monuments he used the simplest, but most touching emblems, to describe events, such as a broken lily in the centre of a wreath, to symbolise the death of the head of a family. In statuary his attitudes are easy and unrestrained. He showed people as they were, rather than after a fanciful manner which might look imposing, but certainly would not be natural.

One of his most widely known works is the monument in Lichfield Cathedral, known as the "Sleeping Children," erected to the memory of the two children of the Rev. W. Robinson. A friend of the sculptor's was one day contemplating it,

when he heard a man who stood by remark: "How admirably the mattress on which the children are lying is represented!"

When told of this criticism, Chantrey replied, "That he who said so was a sensible, honest man, for he spoke of that which he understood, and of nothing else."

Another charming child-portrait is that of Lady Louisa Russell, in Woburn Abbey, whom the sculptor represents standing on tip-toe, with a dove nestling in her bosom.

Chantrey disliked works in bronze; but the numerous commissions which he received for them decided him to build a foundry for himself conveniently near his residence in Eccleston Place. His equestrian statue of Sir Thomas Munro, at Madras, is said to be a good specimen of his skill in this branch of art. The Duke of Wellington, when he saw it, delivered himself of three criticisms, with pauses between each: "A very fine horse—a very fine statue—and a very extraordinary man!"

In London we have, amongst other pieces of his work, the statues of Pitt in Hanover Square, of George the Fourth in Trafalgar Square, of the Duke of Wellington in front of the Exchange, and of Canning in the Abbey.

In Edinburgh there are Lord Melville, President Blair, and Chief Justice Dundas. The statue of George Washington, in the States House, Boston, U.S.A., is another example of his work.

In 1818 he visited Italy, and, whilst there, went to Carrara to choose marbles. Upon his arrival at the quarry, he did not immediately disclose his name, and was immensely amused to find that only inferior specimens of marble were shown to him. He remedied the error, and immediately the best of the place was put before him.

In this country he made the acquaintance of Thorwaldsen, and Canova. It is written of the English and Italian masters, that, when they parted, they exchanged cloaks as a tribute of friendship one for the other.

It is now time to speak of Chantrey's honours, ere this brief record of a busy life closes. In 1816, he was chosen an Associate of the Royal Academy, and in 1818, a member. During his sojourn in Italy, he was elected member of the Academies of Rome and Florence. In 1835, William the Fourth bestowed upon

him the honour of knighthood; and he was made a D.C.L. of Oxford.

On the twenty-fifth of November, 1841, after only two hours' illness, Chantrey died from the effects of heart-disease, under which he had for some time laboured, and was buried in a tomb of his own construction, in his native village, Norton.

Lady Chantrey survived her husband—there were no children—and at her death, according to the provisions of his will, his wealth and valuable collection became the property of the Royal Academy.

"Sir Francis Chantrey," writes one of his friends, "made the Academy the first object of his thoughts, and has nobly proved it by his will. When he became a member of the body, his exertion in council, and in the general assemblies, was zealous and uninterrupted, until the end of his mortal career. The little attention given to the higher branches of Art in this country, induced Chantrey to turn his mind to the promotion of a study, instructive, as well as amusing, to mankind; and as he did not find persons inclined to give commissions, or purchase pictures of a moral, historical, or religious character, he wished to establish a fund, to prevent an object so desirable being lost sight of, and left the greater part of his property for that purpose. Such was his trust in the Royal Academy, that he confided the decision on works to be selected to members of that institution."

In his youth Chantrey was thought like Shakespeare; so much so, indeed, that he once said: "Shakespeare might have been the ruin of me; for when I was young, and knew no better, I had been told I was like his picture, and that notion nearly made me a coxcomb!"

In the National Portrait Gallery there are one or two likenesses of this eminent man.

THE LETTER "H."

ALTHOUGH it is generally recognised that the correct usage of the letter H is a sign of education and culture, the cause of its being misused so frequently is a problem as to the solution of which there is not so much unanimity. The whole question, however, resolves itself into this: Is the misuse of the aspirate "no new thing," or has it become common since a recent period only? Let us consider the evidence for the former view first.

Anlus Gellius, who flourished nearly eighteen hundred years ago, has recorded the fact that the old Latin writers of two centuries earlier, had called this injustice to the H a barbarism; whereas Nigidius Figulus, a celebrated grammarian contemporary with Cicero, had pronounced it a provincialism.

Clearly, therefore, there was something wrong with the H even in those days. It is curious, too, that the troublesome letter was a stumbling-block to the ancient Hebrews also; at least, to the unfortunate Ephraimites, who, after their defeat by Jephtha, strove to escape by denying themselves; but each man was questioned by the victorious Gileadites:

"Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said Nay, then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth; for he could not frame to pronounce it right," etc.

Here of course the H is medial. Among the arguments set forth in a pamphlet written for the purpose of identifying the British people with the lost tribes of Israel, it is stated that Ai is frequently called Hai, in the Bible itself, and, contrariwise, Hai is called Ai.

As evidence in the same direction, it is pointed out that the use of "an," before words beginning with H, in our translation and in English writings belonging to the last century and the beginning of the present, shows that in those days people were careless about the use of the aspirate. Mr. Grant White, who has traced the misuse of H more than two hundred years back, quotes, in support of his conclusion, the following extracts from the marriages and births in an old family Bible:

"John Harmond hand Mary was married in the year of our Lord God 1735, November the 25 day. John, the son of John Harmond, was born the 24 day of June, 1737, half an our after tow o'clock."

He concludes from this that "hand" was used for "and," and "a hour" for "an 'our.'"

But—to turn to the other side of the question—it is just as reasonable to conclude that the omission of the H in spelling the word "hour" shows that nobody sounded it in that word. As regards the appeal to the Bible, everybody knows that "a" and "an" are in many cases used indifferently—"a hour," for example, in one part, and "an hour" in another. And, if the misuse of H were general, it is rather

surprising that it did not attract the attention of the novelists until the last generation. So far as we remember, the "H malady" is not referred to at all in Fielding or Smollet.

Perhaps the most striking argument against what may be called the "ancient" theory, is, however, found in the fact that in America, as in Ireland, the letter H is scarcely ever misused; and indeed it is the belief in those countries that a recent arrival from England may be known by the peculiarity of his speech in regard to the letter H.

If, then, we suppose that, say one hundred and fifty years ago, the misuse of the aspirate was common in this country, how are we to account for the correct speaking of the Americans? Nobody will ascribe it to more widely-diffused education; because it is well known that in America, and, perhaps, still more in Ireland, there are some people who cannot even spell words which they pronounce correctly. As modes of pronunciation are handed down from generation to generation, and as the bulk of the English part of the American nation has gone over to the new country within the last century and a half, there is good reason to infer that the misuse of the letter H is of comparatively modern origin. If it can be proved beyond doubt that this view is erroneous, it is inexplicable how the Americans and the Irish are accurate in the matter of their Hs.

Any reader who will look through a list of the "obsolete" words in Thomson's poems, will see many so classified which are now known to "any schoolboy." Having had a rest, such words have come into use again. Language is constantly changing, and it may be that, at irregular intervals, there breaks out an H epidemic. The Heepian dialect was no doubt a satire of some current mispronunciations of the time, and it certainly did not fail in its object, for it is now the usual practice to sound the H in "hospital," "humor," and "humble." Some writer of the twentieth century may have occasion to again draw attention to the subject.

The forcible introduction of the H where it ought not to be, and the painfully obtrusive strengthening of the H where it ought to be, may be fairly regarded as effects of reaction against a bad habit. Conscious that they are blundering, people of the class of Mr. Middlewick put in a strong H or two to make up for a dozen which they have left out, until, getting more and more confused,

they become as bad as Punch's barber, or the man in the story told by Sir H. Ponsonby. A Mr. Hillier remonstrated with a friend for calling him 'Illier.

"What do you mean?" asked the friend. The reply was staggering. "If a hache and a hi and a hel and a hel and a hi and a he and a har don't spell 'Illier, what do they spell?"

Some persons, however, drop Hs in certain words without making up for the omission by putting in the aspirate where it is not wanted. Mr. T. A. Trollope says that Landor belonged to this class. In his case the habit could not have been due to ignorance — indeed, the assertion would be almost incredible, were it not notorious that Landor had many peculiarities of pronunciation.

It would be difficult to say in what districts the misuse of the letter H is most prevalent; and, considering the spirit of "clannishness" which animates most of us, it is unwise to be too dogmatic on this point. But, speaking roughly, we think it may be said that the mispronunciation of H is very common in the South and very rare in the North. The true Cockney who has received a reasonable education is, compared with the mass of Englishmen, neither very good nor very bad in regard to the letter H. He certainly does not misplace his Hs with such monotonous regularity as Theodore Hook and the wits of the Albert Smith school would have us believe. The inhabitants of Worcestershire, it has been said, like to immortalise their pronunciation on stone, and in proof of the assertion the following lines of an epitaph are quoted:

Lo! where the silent marble weeps,
A faithful friend and neighbour sleeps,
A brother and a uncle dear,
As to the world did appear.

It will be observed that the third line requires the additional H—"a huncle." This doggerel, however, is common in all parts of the country, and was probably written by somebody very far removed from any relation to Worcestershire. The charge brought against another county, in the form of a remonstrance from the letter H to the inhabitants of Shropshire, is more to the point:

Whereas by you we have been driven
From hearth and home, from hope and heaven,
And plac'd by your most learn'd society
In exile, anguish, and anxiety,
We hereby claim full restitution,
And beg you'll mend your elocution.

The reply, however, is clever:

Whereas we rescued you, ingrate,
From hell, from error, and from hate,
From hedgebill, horsepond, and from halter,
And consecrated you in altar,
We think your claim is an intrusion,
And will not mend our elocution.

Although not immediately bearing upon the misuse of H, it is not without interest in this connection that both Irishmen and Scotchmen sound the aspirate before the W in such words as "what," "when," and "which," to which they give the same value as the Anglo-Saxon "hwæt," "hwænne," "hwite."

Soon after "David Copperfield" was published, there arose quite a little storm in the dignified pages of "Notes and Queries" in reference to the Heepian dialect. One correspondent wrote that, in his childhood, he was always taught to sink the H in "humble," and added that he regretted that the author thought fit to proscribe this practice, so far as in him lay, by making it the Shibboleth of two of the meanest and vilest characters in his works. Another correspondent—a Londoner—says he never heard the H sounded in "humble," except from the pulpit; while still another gives the following ingenious solution of the difficulty: "All existing humility is either pride or hypocrisy. Pride aspirates the H, hypocrisy suppresses it. I always aspirate." Others, again, strongly contended that the author of "David Copperfield" was quite right. Who shall decide when doctors disagree? Even admitted authorities are at issue with regard to many words commencing with H; and, therefore, it is not surprising that ordinary persons, who do not have the opportunity of hearing the best speakers and of reading the best authors, should be hopelessly at sea as to many of the delicate subtleties of the letter H.

The article "an" is an unsafe guide to those in doubt, since Jane Austen wrote "an hozier;" and the translators of the Bible say, "an high hand," "an hair," "an habergeon," "an humble heart," etc.

Then vocal ease is an equally unsatisfactory test. Possibly some people may experience difficulty in saying "a hotel," or "a historian;" but with the majority of people proper aspiration in both those instances is just as easy as in such words as "horse" or "house."

Taking all circumstances into consideration, perhaps the only rough rule in regard

to the correct use of the letter H is that it should be pronounced in all words coming to us from the Celtic stock, and be passed unsounded in all words of Latin origin. The following ingenious composition was produced to show the effect of such a rule :

Ha ! 'tis a horrible hallucination
To grudge our hymns their halyoon harmonies,
When in just homage our rapt voices rise
To telebrate our heroes in meet fashion ;
Whose hosts each heritage and habitation,
Within these realms of hospitable joy,
Protect securely 'gainst humiliation,
When hostile foes, like harpies, would annoy.
Habituated to the sound of H
In history and histrionic art,
We deem the man a homicide of speech,
Maiming humanity in a vital part,
Whose humorous hilarity would treat us,
In lieu of H, with a supposed hiatus.

THE EIFFEL TOWER.

THE other morning—it was a moist, soft, dripping, and not unkindly morning of early spring—the clouds hung low and threatened more rain ; but the sunshine made a fight to struggle through the clouds, and, between smiles and frowns, everything went at a gentle undecided pace among the broad boulevards and monumental buildings of charming Paris. Come rain, and the noise of the traffic would settle into a steady roar ; innumerable umbrellas would hustle and hurtle against each other ; the towering façades would assume a dismal chilly aspect, and all Paris would shrink into its shell—liveries would be cased in oilskins, elegant costumes shrouded in waterproofs, uniforms wrapped up in military cloaks, and brazen helmets deprived of their sweeping plumes, dripping like so many barbers' basins. But let it be sunshine, and everything will unfold and spread out. Wheels and hoofs will give out a pleasing chime, mingled with the cries of the streets, with the chatter and laughter of women and children, and the rattle of glasses and trays from under the awnings of the cafés ; while the wet, shining roadways show bright reflections of the white tall houses with their curtains and persiennes, and their balconies crowded with flowers.

After all, it is not a terrible affair to be caught by a sudden shower in the streets of Paris, even in a new hat and "sans parapluie ;" there are so many corners to shelter in—portes-cochères, awnings, passages, and innumerable portals of hotels and cafés.

But it is a different matter to be overtaken by the storm in crossing a wide, open space like the Place de la Concorde, with only a statue or a fountain offering itself as a place of refuge. All the world has fled, and in the whole extent of the wide Place, there is only to be seen the figure of a solitary dragoon cantering dolefully along under the weight of a despatch from the Ministry of War. Yet the shower passes, and everything brightens up in a moment—the trees in the gardens just thickening with buds ; columns and arches in the long perspective ; the gilded dome of the Invalides shines out from over the river ; and there, away, that wonderful Eiffel Tower, whose top is, for the moment, wrapped in wreathing clouds. The base of it is plainly outlined against the dark background of lowering sky—those four gigantic feet, which it plants so firmly on the soil, as if it were the elephant of Indian mythology, which sustains the weight of the world. The lowest platform is visible, too, and the one above it ; but the tapering heights beyond are lost among the clouds. And the mystery in which it is now veiled gives an air of grandeur and even grace to this great monument of the age of iron.

This aspect of the Eiffel Tower is but a transitory one. Soon the clouds pass away, or float into higher regions, and the full proportions of the structure are revealed. As one approaches it are to be seen men like flies crawling about among the cobweb tracery of the ironwork. The subdued rattle of hammers is heard from far overhead. People all speak respectfully of the Eiffel Tower, which forms a leading mark, as sailors would say, for Paris and its forthcoming Exhibition. Silenced are all the objectors who, when the tower was first designed, objected that it would neither be elegant nor useful, and that it would even militate against the architectural beauties of Paris by dwarfing the proportions of its noblest monuments. Now that the tower is finished, and rears itself proudly as the very tallest monument ever erected by the skill of man, all Paris shares in the pride, and plumes itself upon the achievement.

On the quays, by the river, men are selling views and descriptions of the new-born wonder, and the portrait of its designer and builder ; and it is curious to note that line for line and rib for rib, the existing tower corresponds exactly with the first design published three years ago, before the tower was commenced. Toys

of all kinds, too, are on sale, in which the Eiffel Tower appears in one form or another; and the open-air merchants seem to do a brisk trade in these memorials of the great achievement.

A little further on, an old gentleman has rigged up a telescope on a stand, and offers passers-by a peep at the operations going on at the very summit of the tower, where men are crawling about like flies, engaged in putting the finishing touches to the crowning cupola. "C'est bien curieux," says the old gentleman, confidentially, as he pockets the offerings of his clients; and curious, indeed, it is to see those midge-like men hammering away, quite at home at that giddy height, and to hear the faint clink of their tools from on high, as if repairs were going on in the vault of heaven.

The tower grows upon you as you approach it, crossing that bridge of Jena, which truculent old Blucher would have blown up to the skies, on account of the name it bore, so unpleasantly commemorative of Prussia's great disaster. From the bridge you can appreciate the height and span of the great arches, which bind together the massive feet of the monster tower, beneath which appear in the distance the domes and towers of the Exhibition buildings. All about are the sheds and workshops belonging to the undertaking; and the road descends into a waste of ruts and cart-tracks, where you look up into the network of the giant, creep under his huge legs and peep about, and follow with the eyes the lines of stairs and ladders which zigzag upwards from height to height. One has a feeling, somehow, that the earth is crushed and compressed under its monstrous burden; but this is only in the imagination. We are assured that the pressure is so distributed that its effect is nowhere greater than that beneath the walls of any building of moderate height. Tossed and tumbled as the earth has been round about, it is being rapidly brought into order by mattock and rake. A confused heap of stone and earth in the middle is presently to appear as a great circular fountain; and the waste ground about it will soon be green with turf and gay with flowers.

The plan of the tower is simplicity itself. It consists of four curved and tapering latticed girders set on end, which approach each other at a gentle inclination till they meet, and are then continued in the form of a square tower of iron lace-

work to the height of the topmost platform or gallery, which is eight hundred and sixty-three feet above the level of the soil. From the gallery springs a lighter cupola of arabesque complexion, crowned with a square lantern tower surrounded by a small gallery, accessible to the most adventurous, the extreme summit reaching the proposed height of three hundred metres, or nearly a thousand English feet.

Returning to the basement of the tower, we find its four pedestals connected by four enormous arches of latticed ironwork, the crown of each being some hundred feet in height from the ground with a span of a little over two hundred. From the inner angles of these arches springs a high latticed dome, a maze of intersecting ironwork, up to which you gaze with wonder as you stand beneath the centre of the tower. Above this is placed the lower gallery, which runs round the outside of the whole erection, destined to become a place of popular resort, with cafés, concerts, and restaurants to pass the time, and all around stretches a fine panorama of Paris, with the Seine wandering among palaces and public gardens, with the park of St. Cloud and the Bois de Boulogne setting off the great curve of the sparkling river, while to the north the heights of Montmartre frown darkly over the city, with the bulk of the great church rising among its scaffoldings. Then for a more distant view there is the second gallery, at the height of three hundred and seventy-six feet. In the platform below we were on a level with the Monument, and here we are just above the golden gallery of St. Paul's. But for those who have the heart to make the ascent, and take a place in the lift for a journey towards the sky, there is that wonderful eyrie at the top, the highest point ever yet reached by human constructions.

From the very top of the tower on a clear day is a view like that from a balloon. Paris is seen as a whole, girt with her ramparts and protected by outlying forts; far away among fields and market-gardens all round lies a soft, fertile country, with forests here and there, and parks and châteaux, and innumerable villages, and rivers like silver ribbons winding here and there. The eye may follow the course of the Seine till it loses itself among the hills of Normandy. With a powerful glass, perhaps, one might make out the tower of that Château Gaillard, which Richard Cœur

de Lion placed there as the impregnable bulwark of that fair province. Then there is the valley of the Oise, with Chantilly perched upon its wooded heights. A cloud on the horizon may perhaps represent the busy city of Amiens, and further to the right can be discovered the course of the river Marne, as it comes wimpling in from the gentle slopes and vine-covered hills of Champagne. Taking a turn about the gallery, behold there is Fontainebleau with its forests; and, beyond, the hills that guard the upper course of the Loire even to Orleans. And the country that lies over there is fertile Burgundy. It is a bird's-eye view of one of the fairest and most fertile regions of the earth.

Best garden of this world,
Our fertile France.

And, indeed, the far-reaching view from this dizzy height has suggested that one of the uses of the tower would be in the direful event of another war, as a look-out post from which to watch the approaches to Paris, and to keep an eye on the movements of the enemy. Nor would it be difficult to flash signals from the summit of the tower to a vast extent of country round about. But, on the other hand, it would be a handsome mark for the enemy's artillery, and not a pleasant post to occupy during a bombardment.

But let such ill-omened thoughts be banished from this scene of peaceful industry. The tower is a success because it has succeeded, and it is in itself a grand advertisement for the engineering skill and enterprise of our neighbours. Still, if you must have public utility, various ways have been suggested in which it may prove of service in the cause of science. Its summit, placed far above the mists and vapours of the city, might be available for observations of the starry sphere: whether it will be sufficiently free from vibration to allow the use of delicate instruments, is a matter that experience only can decide. Experiments on the laws of gravitation, especially those that govern falling bodies, have also been suggested, as well as demonstrations of the revolution of the earth on its own axis—about which there is, it seems, still some slight scepticism in various quarters.

As to how the tower will behave in a thunderstorm is also the subject of a good deal of speculation. Spectators will probably clear out when any threatening clouds of electric character appear in the

neighbourhood. Yet there is a lightning-conductor, which rises some fifty feet above the summit; and it seems highly probable that the whole structure will form a safe conductor, by which the superabundant fluid of the electric storm may pass safely to and fro. In that case, the tower would serve as the protector of the adjacent regions from destructive thunderstorms. It would be curious, certainly, "bien curieux," to see the summit wreathed in thunder-clouds, and an electric storm in progress among its iron ribs; but here, again, only experience can decide what the effect may prove.

Down below, where people are passing under the huge arches, and craning their necks to see what is going on overhead, there is a general feeling of respect and admiration for the great tower. What a candlestick it will make! What a lighthouse for surrounding regions! When the sun goes down, and the stars begin to appear, the peasant far away will watch for the appearance of the great beacon light—the dazzling electric arc—which will flame from the head of the great tower. From country house and farm, from presbytery and village café, all will await the signal of the mystic beam—the visible sign and witness of the great international fête that is going on at its base. Surely there will be a kind of magic charm about it to bring people from far and near. We shall all fly like moths towards the harmless, cheerful light that is to burn on the top of the Eiffel Tower.

And now it is a question of a more general view from the grounds of the great Exposition. What a scene of bustle and apparent confusion it all is! Great buildings are springing up in every direction, vast halls, lofty domes, and endless ranges of galleries and pavilions. Here a train of loaded railway waggons is rumbling slowly along, drawn by a huge, noisy engine, while a steam-roller close by adds to the din. Carts and rude country waggons, loaded with cases, are drawn by struggling horses along the deeply-rutted tracks, while the encouraging cries of the waggoners, and the resounding cracks of their whips, join the general concert. Among all this confusion, however, there is rest to be found and comparative tranquillity, under the verandah of one of the numerous cafés, which have already opened their doors to the army of employés and exhibitors, and which form a kind of cosmopolitan lounge, where the language is

polyglot, and the costumes and complexions of the company are various. To drink a "bock," and smoke, and gaze solemnly at the Eiffel Tower, is a relief from the whirl of excitement elsewhere. And an American, seated at an adjoining table, regards the scene with an admiring but slightly envious glance.

"Yea, sir," he remarks, "we ought to have had that monument in our country, where its surroundings would have been on a corresponding scale of grandeur."

He does not at first allude to the Washington Monument—hitherto the highest in the world, some five hundred and fifty feet high—but when it is mentioned, he admits regretfully that the Frenchman has gone a good many chips better than that.

Still, America reconciles itself with the suggestion that in weight, perhaps, the trans-Atlantic monument might be superior. And that is possibly the case, for the Eiffel Tower is wonderfully light for its size, and weighs only six thousand five hundred tons, so that it might be possible to take it to pieces, and ship it across the Atlantic.

Our friend seems to be mentally calculating the freight that would have to be paid, and the chances of success of such a speculation. After all, the cost of the tower was not excessive. Two hundred thousand pounds for the biggest tower in the world is not much; and yet it is said that this estimate has hardly been exceeded, at which rate it has cost about threepence a pound—not much above the price of flat-irons.

It may be noticed that even the waiters of the café—and these are not a class generally given to enthusiasm—are greatly interested in the Eiffel Tower. As they dart about here and there, they find a spare moment to watch what is going on in the dizzy heights above. Not many hours will elapse before the work will be pronounced complete; the national flag will be hoisted; a "feu de joie" will be fired; and a "déjeuner," or, at all events, a "ponche," will be given at the very top of the tower. Alphonse is acquainted with a confrère, who is charged with the arrangements of this little fête. To take one's punch or one's coffee at such a height from the ground must be, in the opinion of Alphonse, an "expérience bien curieux."

In the evening glow, when the last touches of sunlight have quitted the domes and towers of the city, when the shadows

are thickening around, and the streets are beginning to glow with the clustered lights of shops and cafés, then the sunbeams still rest on the latticed sides of the monster tower; and then the shadow of the world's round rim creeps slowly upwards, mounts from one gallery to another, and finally wraps the whole in shade.

Before long we may be making excursions to see the sun rise, from the top of the Eiffel Tower.

OUR LADY-HELP.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"ALFRED, please do attend to what I am saying," my wife began, in that tone of scarcely suppressed irritability which, in the early hours of the day, seems to come so naturally to married ladies. "Charlie is really too old to be left with Margery any longer. The child will be seven to-morrow; we must make some change."

We were sitting at breakfast. It was the twenty-first of March. I remember the date well, for, when my wife addressed me, I had in my hand the publisher's account for bringing out my little volume of poems, and its amount had proved a shock to my feelings.

"Certainly, dear, I think you are right," I replied, my thoughts still fixed upon the bill.

"He has quite caught Margery's atrocious accent. Alfred, what is the use of my talking to you?"

"My dear Arabella, I am listening to every word you say"—"Margery's accent" had revealed to me that Mrs. Fortescue was going through one of her periodic panics concerning the ignorance of her youngest child—"the boy should have a governess."

"How can you be so thoughtless! Really, Alfred, any one would think, to hear you talk, that you had no natural feeling. You know Dr. Rouston-Rouston says that it would be positively dangerous for the dear boy to touch a book for the next two years at least."

"Why on earth, then, are you worrying about him? The little fellow is all right with Margery."

At this I was overwhelmed with reproaches. I was told that I neglected my child shamefully; that it was well for him he had a mother to take care of him, and

many another of those home truths which it seems the fate of good-tempered, easy-going men to have cast at them. The upshot of the matter was that my wife declared her intention of having a lady-help.

I was amused at the idea—the word seemed to suggest such a queer anomaly—but I did not object. The question concerned Charlie much more than me, I thought.

"Yes, that might be a solution of the difficulty; only, for Heaven's sake, Arabella, do let her be decently good-looking. Your new housemaid is too ghastly. Jenkins almost choked with laughter when he saw her the other night."

That was all I said, not a word more; and yet to this day it is commonly believed in our family circle, not only that it was I who wished to engage a lady-help, but also that I insisted upon her being young and beautiful!

I had heard nothing more of the affair for some days when, returning one evening from the office, my wife greeted me with a radiant smile.

"Alfred, I have been so fortunate! Annie Lascelles called this afternoon, and she knows of the very thing we want. She is the daughter of a curate down in Devonshire, and is just as good and sweet as she can be. She is little more than a child herself, so she will be a delightful companion for Charlie."

At first, I had felt rather mystified as to what "the very thing that was the daughter of a curate" might be; but, at the allusion to Charlie, it dawned upon me: of course, it was the lady-help again. And, sure enough, one morning, about a week later, I found a tall, delicate-looking girl sitting at the breakfast-table. She gave me a shy, timid little bow, and seemed rather frightened when I would shake hands with her.

"She is really not bad-looking," I remember thinking to myself. "In fact, if she were less white and trembling, she would be almost pretty."

Her features were delicate and refined, and her small, well-shaped head was covered with a perfect wealth of silky, blue-black curls, cut short like a boy's. Still, she was certainly not attractive; she never raised her eyes from the table, and seemed so manifestly ill at ease, that it gave me quite an uncomfortable sensation to look at her.

In these early days, I saw very little of

our lady-help, for we had a new head in our department at the office, who was making our lives a burden, so I was rarely at home.

One afternoon, however, I managed to get off a little earlier than usual, and walked across that rather desolate part of Kensington Gardens that lies between the Round Pond and Birdcage Walk. It was completely deserted; not a creature was to be seen. I was walking along on the soft, smooth grass, when suddenly some one from behind a tree almost sprang into my arms. She—for it was a lady—came with such velocity, that it was by the merest chance in the world we did not both fall to the ground. As a simple measure of precaution, I was obliged to support her. For one moment she lay in my arms, panting and breathless; and as I looked down into her face, I thought I had never seen a more lovely creature. What eyes! What a colour! I did not know her in the least, and yet in some indefinable way she recalled a face that I had seen, though I could not have said where or when.

At that moment Charlie's shrill, childish voice rang through the air:

"Papa, papa, I say, that isn't fair. You have just spoilt the game. How could Lily run when you stood in her way?"

It flashed into my mind that Miss Lilian Bollitho was the name of our lady-help! But who in this nymph, with dishevelled hair, flushed cheeks, and eyes flashing with life and gaiety, would ever have recognised the pale, die-away creature whom I was accustomed to see at breakfast?

Whether Miss Bollitho found me less formidable than my wife, I cannot say; but certainly, now that I was alone, her manner showed none of that painful nervousness that usually characterised her. She was still very shy, but not awkwardly so; on the contrary, there was something rather taking in the way she would raise her great, brown eyes for one moment to my face, and then let them fall, as if startled at their own audacity.

I walked home with her, Charlie gambolling on in front. Just as we were coming out of the Park gate we met Frank Bristowe, my wife's rather disreputable brother-in-law, and I was considerably annoyed at the look of undisguised amusement he cast at us in passing.

My wife and I had arranged to go to the theatre that evening; but, at about six o'clock, we had a note from my sister who was to have accompanied us, begging us to

use her ticket, as she could not. I suggested that we should take Miss Bollitho with us. My wife caught at the idea.

"The very thing. I have been wishing I could give the poor child a little pleasure; but I didn't like to suggest it as I knew you disliked her, though I don't know how you can, for she is so good to Charlie. You won't mind her dining with us just for once?"

When Miss Bollitho came down dressed for the theatre she really was a perfect little picture, so quaint and pretty did she look in her queer short-waisted gown, made of some soft silky stuff covered with birds and flowers, evidently an old family relic. Her pretty, girlish neck was uncovered, and she wore white-silk spider-web mittens, such as were in fashion some hundred years ago. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were sparkling with subdued excitement, as if she felt the gods were favouring her more than she deserved.

My wife looked at her with real, honest pleasure in her eyes.

"How can you think that girl plain?" she said to me when we were alone for a moment. This was in allusion to a remark of mine the day I first saw our lady-help. "I never shall understand what you men admire in a woman. I think she is perfectly lovely."

So did I, but I had not the time to confess it; so did a good many other people in the Lyceum that night. As I noted the glances of admiration that were cast at her, I really felt proud of my beautiful young charge; and, no doubt, my manner to her was just a trifle warm, although, of course, only in a fatherly sort of way. Mrs. Fortescue must have noticed this, I think, for she seemed slightly annoyed; but she said nothing, unless, indeed, her rather tart remark about the greyiness of my moustache had some bearing on the point.

Now it so happened that my wife took cold that night, and was laid up with a swollen face and inflammation of the glands. Miss Bollitho and myself were therefore in some degree thrown upon each other for companionship. She made breakfast for me, and now that she had lost her white, scared look, she, and the great urn behind which she sat, made a very pretty picture. She always made my coffee exactly to my taste. No matter how late I might be, I always found hot rolls and cutlets waiting. In a word, she showered

down upon me all those little acts of kindly courtesy which it is so pleasant to receive from the hands of a lady. In our early married days my wife had done the same; but that was before children appeared upon the scene. I will confess that I soon began really to like our lady-help. I liked her quaint, old-fashioned ways, her little friendly attentions; and why the deuce should I not have liked them! A man of forty—my wife takes care I do not forget my age; it is the same as her—may surely like a pretty little thing young enough to be his daughter. Why, if Frank, our eldest boy, had lived, he would have been almost as old as Lily.

Under the gentle influence of our lady-help, breakfast became really a pleasant meal. We all chatted together, and Charlie's odd reflections furnished an inexhaustible subject for laughter. One morning when I, as usual, went up to see my wife before starting for the office, I found her more glum than ever. Instead of replying to my greeting, she enquired, in a sepulchral tone, what there was in the "Times"? As she spoke, I suddenly remembered that I had never looked into it. I had, however, just presence of mind enough not to confess the fact, for my reading at breakfast was one of my wife's standing grievances, and I would not for the world have let her know that I had not been doing it of late.

"In the 'Times'?" I replied, with as much coolness as I could summon; "oh, nothing special. Bulgaria is again to the fore; and, as usual, they have been bull-baiting Balfour."

"Margery, please go and fetch the 'Times' Mr. Fortescue has left in the breakfast-room."

Like lightning it shot through my mind that the "Times" was probably uncut, just as it had been left at the door.

"I am afraid I must go."

I began preparing to beat a retreat.

"Alfred, may I beg that you will favour me with your company for a few minutes? I will not detain you long."

"Favour!" "Detain!" This looked serious.

Margery brought the "Times," evidently untouched. Not a word. One glance from the paper to my face was all Mrs. Fortescue vouchsafed. I felt most uncomfortable; but decided that it would be too undignified to offer an explanation, even if I had had one ready.

"Breakfast is quite a gay meal now," my

wife continued, always in the same sepulchral tone. What a fool I was to have forgotten she was just over the breakfast-room! "I am afraid I must be a sad wet blanket, for there are no such bursts of merriment when I am there. I suppose that is why you used to read the 'Times'!"

The pause that ensued was terrible.

"Alfred, I don't like to give the servants unnecessary trouble. Is there any use in their putting a fire in the smoking-room now that you spend your evenings in the schoolroom?"

"What are you driving at, Arabelle?"

"Oh, nothing. Of course the servants will make remarks; but if you don't mind, I am sure I don't."

"Mind what? Do try to speak more plainly. I don't understand a word of what you are saying." The "Ancient Mariner's" glittering eye was nothing to the orb my wife fixed on me. "Arabelle, this is really too absurd. Are you making all this fuss because I went into the school-room last night to give a book to Lily?"

"Lily!"

Mrs. Fortescue almost shrieked the name.

"Miss Bollitho, I mean, of course. Charlie always calls her——"

"May I ask whether Miss Bollitho also calls you Alfred?" she enquired in a lofty, indifferent manner.

"Certainly not. It is an insult to the girl to ask the question. I will not listen to such outrageous folly," and I strode away, feeling as if I had scored a point.

How the deuce did my wife know that I had been in the schoolroom the night before? Not that I cared, of course; why should I? It was the simplest accident in the world. The way it happened was this. The thing I abhor most in the world is sitting for hour after hour with not a soul to speak to. Now, that evening, I had dined alone. I had been up to Arabelle's room, and found it perfectly stifling—the temperature would have given me a fit of apoplexy in five minutes—and as I was wandering up and down the hall, undecided whether to hunt up Jenkins or to go to the club, I noticed that the schoolroom door was a little open. I glanced in. There was Miss Bollitho—pretty and fresh as a flower—her whole heart and soul fixed upon the book she was reading; and the book was my book, my own little volume of poems! Seized with an irresistible longing to know which she was reading, I went softly into the

room. Ah! it was my special favourite, the poem I loved best, "Parted."

Now, during the eighteen years we had lived together, my one serious cause of complaint against my wife had been that she was always trying to damp my literary aspirations. As she herself confessed, she had no taste for poetry, and from the day that we were married, she had stoutly refused to read a line of mine. Once, when I had insisted upon reading "Parted" to her, she had absolutely laughed in the midst of the most pathetic verse.

Tears were standing on Lily's dark lashes. Her confusion at being detected weeping over a love-poem was the prettiest thing imaginable. I took the book from her hand. What poet would have done less? I read to her some little sonnets, which I considered, perhaps, the best things I had done. Nothing grand, you know, but pathetic: the sort of thing a girl would like.

I remember, now, most of those I read turned on the sorrow of losing those whom we love, and, in the midst of one which described how a young soldier, whilst dying on a battle-field, fancied that his fiancée is by his side, poor Lily—tender-hearted little thing that she is—sobbed aloud. Could I ever doubt again that my poems had the ring of truth?

As I watched the girl's unfeigned emotion; noticed her varying colour; the expression of her great, dark eyes changing with every thought; I felt for the first time that I had found one who understood me; felt, too, that I had in me the making of a true poet, and that hers was the touch which was to call to life the poetic flame.

A really sympathetic listener is a rare avis; no wonder that was a happy evening. Poor child! she told me she had never spoken to a real poet before; and her wondering gratitude as I read to her was quite touching—her lisping murmurs of admiration, in my ear delicious. The hours flew only too quickly, and we were both equally startled when midnight struck.

"I had no idea it was ten o'clock," Lily cried in dismay. "I have had such a happy evening. How shall I thank you?"

And, with the prettiest air of mingled shyness and devotion, she just touched my fingers with her lips. For the moment I swear I felt the "Immortal" she believed me to be. I had planned half-a-dozen such

evenings, and here was this absurd folly of my wife's just going to spoil everything. Our new chief was away that morning, so there was nothing going on in the office, and I tossed off several little things which I could not but feel were better than anything I had written before. Miss Bollitho's name was a splendid one for rhyming. Lillian, Lillias, Lilia, Lily, why, there was no end to the variations of which it was capable. One poem that I wrote I determined to give to her. It was, perhaps, a thought tender; but then, after all, she was little more than a child, so it didn't matter. When I had finished this, I thought of her as I had seen her the night before, listening with rapt attention whilst I read; and, as the picture rose before my mind, poetic fervour took possession of my soul; a power stronger than myself forced me to write. I dreamed that I was twenty, and that she—I called her Lily—was mine, my life, my all. It was a passionate love-poem; but what of that? Did not Dante and Petrarca write love-poems to women who were not their wives? In me, as in them, the poet and the man are distinct; the one adored a lovely vision, the other never wronged his wife even in thought.

That afternoon I again met Miss Bollitho and Charlie. I could not help thinking that she was expecting me, she was so prettily confused when I appeared, and seemed to have something she wished to say to me. Just as we were beginning to talk, that hateful Frank Bristowe joined us. I was thoroughly angry, for the fellow is a cad, and was evidently bent on forcing me to introduce him to Lily. To put a stop to his impertinence, I proposed that he and I should walk on together. No sooner had we left the other two behind than he turned upon me, roaring with laughter.

"Ah! ah! Mr. Joseph, that is how you pass your time now that your wife is fast in bed, is it? Ah! ah! I saw your little game the other day. It's the best joke in the world. That sweet, confiding way she was looking up into your face was quite touching, whilst as for you—ah! ah! To think of Alfred Fortescue proving a gay Lothario. It was deuced mean of you, though, not to introduce me, for she is an uncommon pretty girl."

My blood boiled. This fellow, who was barely tolerated in the family, to presume to address me in this hail-fellow-well-met fashion, as if we were on terms of equality! It was a gross piece of impertinence, and

I told him so. But he only laughed the more.

"Don't be angry, old fellow," he called out, as I strode away. "You should choose a more secluded place for your rendezvous if you mind being seen. Ha, ha! What a joke!"

I had not lost sight of him five minutes, before it flashed across my mind that it was the day my father-in-law entertained all his family at dinner. I had already declined going, but Bristowe would be sure to be there; and my hair stood on end as I thought of what a picture he might draw of our encounter.

I dined at my club, and did not return home until every one was in bed. Margery waylaid me as I was going down to breakfast next morning:

"Master Charlie would tell you, sir, when you met him and Miss Bollitho in the Park"—good Heavens! did spies dog my steps!—"that missus was very bad yesterday. Really, sir, I was quite afeard, she suffered so awful, poor dear."

Now I value Margery highly; but really her tone was too impertinent—it seemed to imply that I was in some way responsible for my wife's sufferings. I strode past her without a word, for I chose that she should see that I was displeased.

Again, during breakfast, Lily seemed to have something on her mind; but, each time she was on the point of speaking, her courage appeared to fail her. I was quite curious to know what she wished to say.

That afternoon Charlie was accompanied, not by Lily, but by old Margery, who chuckled with unconcealed triumph when I met them, as if she read my disappointment on my face. I could not walk with the boy when that woman was there, so I went home alone. The housemaid told me that Mrs. Fortescue was asleep, and did not wish to be disturbed. And yet I distinctly heard voices coming from her room.

"Well, if she does not wish to see me," I thought, "I will not force myself upon her."

Now I really was not feeling well that day. I think I had had a chill. The fire had gone out in the breakfast-room, and the smoking-room was like a grave.

"There's a nice fire in the schoolroom, sir," the housemaid said, "if you would please wait there until I light this fire."

I was shivering with cold, so, without a moment's thought, I opened the schoolroom door, and, as I did so, I was startled by

hearing low, convulsive sobs, as from some one in an agony of grief; they were really heartrending.

"Miss Bollitho—Lily, what is the matter?" I exclaimed, frightened at the intensity of the girl's distress.

She sprang up wildly, and seized my arm.

"Oh, Mr. Fortescue, I was afraid I should not see you! I did so wish to meet you in the Park, and they would not let me come. I thought I should have died." And she sobbed hysterically, still clinging to my arm.

Had the girl gone mad? I put my arm around her to steady her to the sofa; but, before we had advanced one step, a majestic figure thrust me aside, seized the letter Miss Bollitho was pressing into my hand, and turned and confronted me. It was my mother-in-law. She must have heard every word that had been said. Lily's shriek of terror, when she saw her letter in the hand of that woman, recalled me to a sense of my duty.

"Mrs. Montgore, that letter is not yours, give it to me at once!" I said, in a voice which I in vain tried to render commanding.

"You villain, I would die first!" she screamed. "As for you, you hussy"—I always had had a suspicion that my mother-in-law, if excited, would be vulgar—"you good-for-nothing—"

I seized her by the arm, and tried to take the letter.

"Help! murder!" she shrieked. "Help! help!"

To this day I do not understand how it happened; but, at that moment, my wife, my father-in-law, my brother Jack, his wife, Bristowe, nay, half the relatives I have in the world, burst into the room. Mr. Montgore seemed to understand the scene at a glance. He took the letter from his wife's hand, put it into his pocket, ushered us out of the room and locked the door, leaving Miss Bollitho within. This done, he led the way into the dining-room, sat down at the head of the table, pointed to me to take the chair opposite, begged the others to sit down, reduced his wife to silence—no easy task—and then began, very much in the tone which judges adopt when addressing condemned criminals:

"Alfred Fortescue, I need scarcely tell you that this has come upon us all as a most painful blow; the more painful, perhaps, from being unexpected. I have trusted you, and where I have once trusted I do not lightly withdraw my trust; therefore,

I insist upon a calm and dispassionate investigation of this most painful affair before I can consent to your being treated as one unworthy of being my son-in-law, the husband of my daughter."

At this, Arabelle sobbed aloud; her mother furtively shook her fist; even Jack and his wife looked grave; whilst, as for the others, with the exception of Bristowe, who chuckled, they all simply glowered. But I was too stunned to care. I had the dull, vacant feeling of being in a dream.

"You are accused of carrying on a vulgar intrigue with a young person who is living under your roof. (May I beg that you will not interrupt me?) You are accused, I repeat, of carrying on a vulgar intrigue with this young person, and the following facts are advanced as proofs of the accusation:

"First.—Systematic neglect of your own wife, notably one evening at the Lyceum.

"Second.—Indulging in jokes and undue familiarity with the said young person during breakfast.

"Third.—Being alone with her, under suspicious circumstances, at an unseemly hour of the night.

"Fourth.—Meeting her by appointment in the Park.

"Fifth.—Carrying on a clandestine correspondence with the same.

"Sixth.—Allowing her to kiss you."

"I saw it with my own eyes," called out old Margery, whom I now first observed to be amongst the spectators.

"He was clasping her in his arms when I entered the room," cried Mrs. Montgore.

"Silence," said Mr. Montgore, sternly. Then, turning to me: "What have you to say in reply to these charges?"

"The whole thing is an infernal concoction," I replied, by this time thoroughly angry. "A villainous slander, invented by spiteful, jealous old women, who hate the girl because she is young and pretty."

My wife and her mother sprang to their feet; but Mr. Montgore again reduced them to silence.

"I understand that you deny the charge?"

"Yes, I do. It is an insult to ask the question."

"You do not, I suppose, deny that this letter"—taking out of his pocket the one his wife had seized from Lily—"was intended for you? Do you object to my reading it?"

"The letter is mine, and I refuse to allow you to read it."

"It will be a question for counsel later to decide whether or not the letter can be admitted as evidence; but, in any case, I will make a note of your protest against its being read."

He deliberately broke the seal, read the first lines, and then, looking at me keenly, said:

"You acknowledge that this letter is addressed to you?"

"Yes."

"This simplifies matters considerably. Arabella, I should recommend your going to your room. No! Very well; perhaps it is as well that you should know the truth at once."

And in his usual metallic, lawyer-like voice, he began to read the letter:

"My own darling, my love! Since my lips last rested on yours."

My brain reeled. What followed I never knew, excepting that it was a wild, fervent love-letter, which no woman could have written excepting under the influence of an all-absorbing passion which she knew to be shared by the man to whom she was writing. Again and again she thanked me for my love, and swore that, although for the moment all seemed against us, she would yet be mine.

"Love," she said, "is immortal; but those who stand between us will perish."

"Arabelle, that's you. They are plotting to murder you."

This suggestion, of course, came from Mrs. Montgore. My wife had a violent fit of hysterics, her sister Maria shook the poker at me. The whole scene was too unutterably horrible; it haunts me to this day.

It was some time before even Mr. Montgore could restore order. His voice was more cutting than ever as he remarked:

"After reading the letter, I do not wonder at your protest. May I ask if you have received many such letters from this young person?"

I was too stunned to reply. I could only shake my head.

"I remember you always carry a letter-book in your pocket; will you allow me to examine it? I must warn you, however, that you are not bound to incriminate yourself."

Scarcely conscious of what I was doing, I handed him the book. He gave a slight grunt as he turned over the leaves; evidently there was nothing in it of interest. How could there be, when I only kept it

for office-work? Suddenly he paused, put his hand to his throat, as if threatened with apoplexy, and, for one moment, his feelings as a man overcoming his instincts as a lawyer, he literally gnashed his teeth with rage as he shook some papers in my face. Then my heart stood still, for I saw that he held in his hand my love-poem—the one written whilst the poetic fervour was upon me. I could bear no more. I rushed from the room—from the house, Jack following me, clinging to my arm. I tried to shake him off, and wished madly that the Thames were near to put an end to my misery.

"I say, Alf, don't attract a crowd. People think you are mad. No, you shan't shake me off; I shall stick to you, bad lot though you be." And, partly by persuasion, partly by force, he conveyed me to his house.

"Now, Alfred," he said to me, a few hours later, when I had become more calm, "do you mean to say you didn't know the girl cared for you?"

"I—I——" Lily's shy, tender blushes rose before my mind, and, try as I would, I could not stifle a feeling of gratification that, in spite of my years, I should have inspired one so young and lovely with so fervent a passion.

"H'm! In that case, the sooner you and I start for Norway, the better," Jack remarked, with an angry grunt.

His wife agreed with him, and it was in vain that I argued and struggled. She, divining why I hesitated, told me she would take care of Miss Bollitho; in fact, would go and fetch her home as soon as we were out of the house.

Four days later we were in Bergen, I, at least, feeling very low and depressed. My wife's face, as I had last seen it, haunted me. I thought of little Charlie, and could have cried. Even the remembrance of the "grande passion" I had inspired, failed to comfort me. "What business had girls to have 'grandes passions' for married men?" I asked, angrily.

A letter was brought in. It was from Lottie—Jack's wife.

"Come back at once," she wrote. "What a parcel of geese we have been! Lily Bollitho—whom I have just handed over to her father's keeping—is madly in love with a penniless young officer, to whom she is engaged. That letter was for him; your part was to find out the young man's address at the Horse Guards, as his last letter had fallen into Mr.

Bollitho's hands, who had burnt it. Thursday was the day for the mail, hence her excitement. Your wife is so delighted at this discovery, that she seems to have forgotten all about the poems. Come at once."

I was relieved, but a little disappointed too, and we returned by the next boat.

WITH COMPOUND INTEREST.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.
By LUCIE WALKER.

CHAPTER I.

"My dear Ursula," exclaimed the master, a little impatiently, "that performance is as poor and expressionless as a performance well can be. When are you going to begin to grasp the spirit of this movement?"

"I really can't say," replied the pupil, indifferently; "it is so deadly uninteresting, that it does not seem as if one could put any spirit into it."

"Do not throw the blame on the music," rejoined the master; "it is yourself who are at fault. A year ago you would have delighted in the effort to comprehend this. Now you seem to have lost all ambition to excel in your art."

The girl smiled. She had a beautiful face, and her smile made it still more beautiful.

"You are quite right, Felix," she said, "my ambition seems to have died a natural death. Now, don't sigh and look so desperately unhappy; if I take it coolly, why should not you?"

"Because I think of your future. If you were an independent woman, a want of perseverance would be sad enough; but you cannot afford to neglect your talent, and your opportunities for cultivating it. Your final examination is to take place in less than three months!"

"So you often remind me; but what if, after all, I do not intend to go in for the final examination?"

"Ursula," interrupted her master, "you would not be so foolish! I cannot tell you what a bitter disappointment it would be to me."

Ursula smiled again.

"But why should I grind for an examination, when I assure you that I would rather be a nursemaid, or starve outright, than be a professional musician?"

"You used not to say so."

"People learn by experience. I have

long wished to say this to you; I have gone on working to please you and mother. My work has been poor, and you have been dissatisfied, because my heart has not been in it."

"Is that your own idea, or has the suggestion come to you from outside?" he asked, looking searchingly into her face.

"And why should it be a suggestion?" rejoined the girl. "Why may not one have an original idea?"

"It is odd," said the master, more to himself than to his pupil; "here is a talent which might be brought to the very highest pitch of perfection, linked to a character with as much backbone as a jelly-fish. Truly, there are strange combinations in nature."

"Don't be cross, Felix," said the girl; "I'll play it again, if you like, and try to make it sound better. Shall I? Just to soothe your ruffled spirits."

So the pupil resumed her uncongenial task, and the master continued his corrections, while the afternoon sun, streaming in through the three windows of the long, narrow room, revealed with ungenerous directness the shabbiness of the interior, and of all the furniture, excepting only the grand piano at which the two sat, and of which the handsome solidity contrasted brusquely with the littered writing-table, the decrepit chairs, the disorderly accumulation of pipes, photographs, busts, and cards on the mantelpiece.

The only thing in the room, besides the sunshine and the piano, which was bright and fresh, was a handsome frame, which broke the monotony of the faded wall-paper. It contained a diploma setting forth, with many calligraphical flourishes, that, "Herr Felix Martin, born an Englishman, had won such and such honours at the Conservatorium of Leipzig, together with the degree of Doctor of Music."

The shabby, nondescript room, with its uncomfortable contrasts, formed an excellent background for the personage whom Ursula Armitage called Felix, and of whose history the diploma on the wall gave a cursory outline. His age, calculated by that communicative document, was a few months less than thirty; he was small and thin, and his meagre, stooping figure was set off to the least possible advantage by well-worn, badly-cut clothes. His face was keen and intellectual; his eyes, brightened a little just now by irritation, were large and beautiful; but his expression was that of a man dissatisfied with himself and at

variance with his surroundings ; in fact, he himself was one of those strange combinations of Nature's harmonies, and the light of his genius seemed worthier of a more attractive lamp than that in which it burned.

"Time's up, Felix, isn't it?" said Ursula, at last, looking round as she reached the desired haven of a finale.

"No," replied Martin; "you trifled so much time away at the beginning, that we must make up for it."

"Come, come," said Ursula, pleadingly. "You are in a terribly bad humour. I must try to appease you. Now, do be kind, and let me off. I am quite worn out with my labours." And she closed her book, while her master shook his head and muttered something about wilfulness. "Now I'm going to tidy you up a little before I go," she continued; "I can't think how it is your room always looks so comfortable. The other part of the house is cosy enough. Yours is bleakness itself."

"It is this glare of light," he said, nonchalantly. "It makes everything look threadbare. A bright day always reminds me of my own poverty."

"Being poor is a great bore, isn't it?" returned Ursula. "If we were not poor, I might have a talent for music with impunity, no one would insist on my going in for a career. Oh, if I might only be King Midas for a moment!"

"You!" said Martin, drily; "you are more likely to make gold vanish, than to call it into existence. You take after your father."

"You do not say that as if you meant it for a compliment."

"You may take it as you choose."

"Oh, well, father is very clever."

"Yes."

"And handsome and agreeable."

"Very."

"He has been unfortunate; which is not his fault, poor dear. Fancy you blaming any one for having bad luck!"

"Bad luck," said Felix, grimly, "is often another word for bad management."

"I suppose you speak of yourself?" said Ursula. "You cannot, of course, know how father has managed."

"Of course."

"And if you feel your luck does not come because you have managed badly, why do you not go away from us poor, shabby, broken-down people, and see if you can get on better elsewhere?"

"My dear Ursula, replied Felix, "you are talking nonsense. Your mother's house has been my home ever since I can remember. People do not ask a professor of music where and how he lives."

The girl's face flushed; this was not precisely the answer she had expected.

"I see," she said, with a laugh, "I was over-generous in trying to shoulder a responsibility which does not concern me. Of course, a musician generally does live among Bohemians; and the castles in the air, which you used to build at Leipzig, are as likely to be realised among us in Bohemia, as anywhere else. Do you recollect what fine castles they were, Felix?"

"I recollect nothing about them," he replied, as he turned to his writing-table and began to turn over the loose papers; "every lad talks nonsense about his future."

"Have you lost something?" she asked, as she moved to go. "What are you looking for? Shall I help you?"

"No, thanks," he answered, brusquely; "neither you nor I will find here, or elsewhere, what I have lost."

"Ah," cried Ursula, with the air of wishing to change the subject, "I wonder what the postman brought half an hour ago! I must go and find mother."

Ursula Armitage had, with perfect justice, used the name of the metaphorical locality, Bohemia, in speaking of her home. In reality she lived in a semi-detached villa, of which the postal address was "Leonora Lodge, Philistia Park, Blackheath"; but which, since the Armitages had become its tenants, had assumed—from the basement where old Antoine, the French manservant, reigned supreme, to the attic where Mrs. Armitage's yellow-backed French novels lay tied in bundles like tares for the burning—an air of having struck out a line for itself, which the adjacent houses neither appreciated nor imitated.

The head of the house, Mr. Ffolliott Armitage, added more to this Bohemian odour by his absence than his presence. He was reported to live chiefly abroad; but for what reason, and why without his wife and family, had not transpired, and afforded a fine field for conjecture to the inquisitive. On the rare occasions of his visits to Leonora Lodge, he was observed to be a well-favoured, fashionably-dressed man, somewhat over forty. Those who had spoken with him reported him well-bred and well-informed, with a touch of

French polish on the most winning of manners. The climate of Bohemia appeared to have suited him far better than it had suited his wife.

Mrs. Armitage had, undoubtedly, once been handsome, but was now only strong-featured. The many furrows of her face, together with the aroma of bygone prosperity which clung to her gowns and bonnets, would, in some women, have been a claim to compassion. Mrs. Armitage, however, made no such claim. She had seen life under many aspects; she had often been forced to adapt herself to disagreeable emergencies; her experience had written itself out on her forehead and round her mouth in cruel, indelible lines; but she made no confidences to outsiders, nor did she reckon her husband's absence among her trials. Her love for him, never very passionate, had long since died and been buried; its grave was almost forgotten; its very ghost had ceased to walk. All her affection was centred on her bright, wilful, impetuous daughter; all her dependence clung to her adopted son, Felix Martin, who had been in her times of need and loneliness even more than an only son. When she looked at these two, she felt she had still something to hope for, and much to be thankful for, though she had begun life on very different terms with society, and had married Ffolliott Armitage with far other expectations and hopes than those she was realising.

That February afternoon, while Ursula was reluctantly taking her music lesson, Mrs. Armitage sat reading a letter over and over again. The envelope bore the postmark "Toulon," and its contents ran thus:

"DEAREST NAN,—I write this from a spot so charming, that I must not begin to describe it." ("As much enthusiasm for new places as of old," put in Mrs. Armitage.) "Imagine, Nan, a villa, perfection in itself, nesting on a pine-clad slope within earshot of the murmur of the dazzling Mediterranean. Imagine me, the poor, battered soldier of fortune, enjoying the hospitality of the most charming of women, la Baronne di Loscagno, whose acquaintance, with that of her equally charming nephew, I made at Nice. They invited me so urgently, that it would have been ungracious to decline; and here I have been for a week, revelling in their charming society and in the beauty of the place. I cannot tell how the change has soothed me after the worries I have had over my speculation in olives, which did

not succeed as well as I hoped it would. Would you mind writing to Carey, and asking him to let me have another two hundred on those houses of yours? Or it might be a good idea to sell the smallest of the three. What do you think? You are a better man of business than I am.

"By the way, the Baroness talks of wanting an English companion; a pleasant girl, with a decent French accent, and who could do something in the musical line. It strikes me that our darling Ursula, with her long residence abroad, and her musical gifts, seems just cut out for the place. The poor pet will have to fight her own battle in life; she gets no chance of seeing the world, living shut up as she does." ("I wonder who is to blame for that," interposed Mrs. Armitage again.) "The Baroness would give her a liberal salary, and introduce her to a large circle of people. If my wishes count for anything—I may say, if I am to have any voice in the settlement of the child's future—you will at once give your consent, and renounce that musical castle in the air, of which you know I disapprove.

"Yours, F. A.

"P.S.—Since writing the above, I have had a confab with the Baroness; she is wild to have the darling at once. Antoine can bring her as far as Paris.

"P.P.S.—I see I have omitted to say that on the Baroness's estate is a valuable quarry of green marble, which formerly brought immense wealth to the owner. I am busy trying whether it will be possible to recommence the quarrying."

"Umph," said Mrs. Armitage, when she had read and re-read this letter. "Among the many ambiguous letters I have received with the signature, 'F. A.,' this is by no means the least ambiguous;" then, with a look of doubt and distrust on her face, she carried the letter down to the kitchen, where old Antoine was getting his preparations for dinner under weigh.

"Madame has news from Monsieur," he said, as his mistress entered.

"Yes, Antoine, at last; but go on with your vegetables, it needn't make dinner late."

"It is not good news, Madame!"

"Neither good nor bad; it is the old story. Nothing worse."

"Ah!" said the old man, sharply; "then, with Madame's permission, I call it bad enough. Monsieur has found a new speculation; all is couleur de rose. Monsieur asks for money!"

"Your guesses, Antoine, are like divination. The olive speculation has failed. Monsieur wants a little money because he has formed plans for making another fortune."

"But, with Madame's permission, that is not all," said Antoine. "Madame is too accustomed to this to look troubled over it."

"Here, you can read it," said Mrs. Armitage. "I can't settle the question alone."

It took the old man a long time to spell out the dashing scrawl which his mistress handed to him. When he reached the end, he folded the letter slowly and replaced it in the envelope.

"Well?" queried Mrs. Armitage.

"Well, Madame, if the house property is sold, Monsieur will fling the price into the marble quarry; and, after all, no marble will be dug. Ah, Madame," he went on with energy, "it would be a happy day for us all, if somebody or something would put a stop to these wonderful ventures of Monsieur's, which ought to make him rich, but which only load him with debt." And Antoine dashed his carrots into the saucepan, with a vigour which would have augured ill for Monsieur if it had been possible to dispose of him and his vagaries in the same summary manner.

"Never mind the quarry, Antoine, we will take that for granted; the important point is about Mademoiselle."

Antoine was Norman; he reserved his opinion on momentous points. "Madame is right," he said, "it is far more important. It will be such a change for Mademoiselle to go and live among the roses and pine-trees in the South."

"If she goes! But perhaps she has something better to do than to go so far at the whim of a capricious Frenchwoman."

"Then Madame will refuse the offer of Madame la Baronne?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Armitage, perplexedly. "My impulse is to say no, at once and finally. Why does he propose it?"

"Does not the letter explain, Madame?"

"Antoine," said Mrs. Armitage, "you believe in that explanation no more than I do. When has Monsieur ever before concerned himself with his daughter's future? Has he ever troubled himself with the burden of his responsibility?"

Antoine shrugged his shoulders.

"It may occur to Monsieur," he replied, "that Mademoiselle is of an age to settle in life."

"Antoine," interrupted his mistress, sharply, "why do you say that?"

"Because, Madame, I observed that there was mention made of a certain charming nephew."

"Nephew!" cried Ursula, from the doorway. "Whose nephew engrosses you while I have been seeking you all over the house? I was longing to know if there was a letter from father at last. There is, I see; so don't try to hide it, and then make me guess. I can also see, by the way Antoine is peeling those onions, that you have been telling him something highly interesting, if not tragic. Was 'the nephew' the hero of the story? And whose nephew is he?"

"My dear Ursula," said Mrs. Armitage, "you talk at random. Your father's letter is to me on business."

"Nevertheless," said Ursula, "you have shown it to Antoine."

"That is a different matter."

"Not at all, my dear mother. If Antoine may read what father has told you about some one's nephew, so may I; so come upstairs and gratify my curiosity." Mrs. Armitage glanced at Antoine. "Now I won't allow any secret signs," went on Ursula. "I shall read the letter from beginning to end. I want to see how much money father has made by his olives, and when he is coming home to pay off these clamorous tradesmen. Antoine, you will spoil the soup unless you give your mind to it."

With which valediction Ursula led her mother upstairs.

"Ah!" soliloquised Antoine, as the door closed behind them, "it is Mademoiselle who knows how to get her own way; she is the true daughter of Monsieur. I may as well begin to think of accompanying her to Paris."

Antoine's long experience had not led him to a wrong conclusion. To Ursula, her father's proposal seemed to offer a prospect of release from a disagreeable position which she could by no means turn away from. It had come so opportunely; it was so inviting, so unlikely to recur.

Mrs. Armitage, though her judgement urged her to refuse, was too pliable in the hands of those she loved to resist her daughter; and when Ursula had pleaded with her, coaxed her, scolded her, and pouted with her for a couple of days, she surrendered at discretion.

Within a fortnight the day of departure had arrived, and Ursula's boxes were being

packed with such an outfit as could be managed in the exhausted state of the Armitage exchequer.

"Don't fret over the bills, mother," said Ursula, as Mrs. Armitage, with a sad face, folded the new dresses. "It will be an excellent investment. I shall now be able to buy dresses for myself, and shoes, and bonnets, and everything."

"The bills don't worry me, dear. There are so many already, that a few more will be scarcely noticeable."

"Oh, well," cried Ursula, cheerfully, "if you are too philosophical to brood over possible bankruptcy, pray don't let any minor evil, such as the loss of me, weigh down your spirits. I have suffered enough already from the gloom which Felix affects over my departure. Now, mother, you must confess that he has made himself perfectly odious about it."

"He thinks it is not a wise move, dear; and you know Felix never hides his opinion."

"He doesn't; yet he might have the good taste to do so until it is asked for. Oh, mother, if Felix might only have ceased to live with you, before I come back!"

"Before you come back! Why, suppose you and the Baroness do not suit one another, you would be back here directly."

"I hope that may not follow on all these extravagant preparations. But, whenever I return, soon or late, I trust that you and Felix may have dissolved partnership."

"You unreasonable child. Do you forget all that I owe to Felix's staunchness in some of our worst troubles?"

"No, I don't; that is——"

"You extraordinary child! Have you forgotten all that binds Felix to me, and me to him? I hope he will never wish to leave me."

"Father is not of the same way of thinking," replied Ursula.

"That is not to the point," said Mrs. Armitage. "So long as you and I wish Felix to remain here, your father will be perfectly satisfied to allow him to do so."

"I do not speak on father's account," answered the girl. "I myself wish that Felix would leave us."

"Ursula!" cried Mrs. Armitage, "what do you mean? Have you forgotten a certain day, about three years since, when you shed floods of passionate tears because your father suggested Felix should go away and——"

"Hush, mother," cried Ursula; "I will not listen. I was a mere child then."

"You were seventeen, Ursula; you refused to be called a child at the time; you said, if you lived to be a hundred, you would never change."

"I made a mistake of which I do not care to talk. I suppose all people make mistakes sometimes, and they ought to be allowed to forget them, if they cannot otherwise undo them."

"I don't think Felix forgets."

"I'm sure he doesn't wish to remember. He would be very foolish if he did. Besides, why do you talk as if a promise had been made between Felix and me?"

"A promise would have been made if you had had your own way, dear."

"Perhaps; but thank goodness father did not let me have my own way, and there is no promise to break. Ah, mother," she broke off, suddenly, "that white dress must be folded better than that. When a person has only two evening dresses to her name, ancient history must not interfere with the packing of the best of the two."

"I see, my dear," said her mother, smiling, "we leave the ghosts alone to-day."

"Certainly, mother. What sounds more ridiculous than a ghost-story in broad daylight! Now for the travelling-bag. I take after father; I must be comfortable in a railway-carriage. You know my thousand requirements; will you put them together while I run and say good-bye to Felix, after which we shall have time for a quiet cup of tea before we go to the train."

"It is curious," thought Mrs. Armitage, as her eyes followed her daughter out of the room, "that I should never have noticed how her feelings towards Felix have changed. Can she have been influenced in this? Heaven forbid that the resemblance to her father should crop up here also."

Martin was at his writing-table when Ursula entered the room. He had been sitting there, pen in hand, all the afternoon; but a few notes of music roughly scored on the sheet before him, and then scratched out, were the sole visible result of his lucubrations.

"Waiting for an inspiration, Felix!" said Ursula, coming softly behind him.

"No; I am not waiting for anything so ethereal as an inspiration."

"For what then?"

"I have been waiting all day for you to

come at the eleventh hour and say that you have given up this wild scheme, and that you will stay with us and work on to your old aim."

Ursula's bright laugh contrasted sharply with his earnest face and voice.

"You are a droll creature, Felix," she said. "You don't seem to be able to enter into other people's feelings at all. Can't you understand that our present life is utterly irksome to a restless body like me, and that the prospect before me is charming? I am, of course, sorry to leave you all; but any change from this dullness must be for the better. I call it selfish," she went on after a short pause, which he did not break, "in you to make up your mind that your decision in the matter is my duty. At that rate I should have as many 'duties' as my friends had opinions."

"We won't re-commence the argument, Ursula. I'm sorry I insulted you by giving you credit for more judgement and wisdom than you possess."

"Do not trouble to invent such elaborately disagreeable speeches, Felix. I did not come to quarrel, but to say good-bye. Cannot you wish me good speed on what I feel to be a boon of fortune?"

Martin sighed, and looked up at her; his eyes were full of pathetic reproach.

"Well, well," he said, "we have had many differences of opinion in our time, and we have quarrelled over them to our hearts' content, but we must part friends, mustn't we?"

"Of course we must," replied Ursula, cheerfully.

"And will you remember me, when you have begun this fine new life?"

"Felix, what a question! How could I forget you?"

"Ursula," said Martin, taking her hand, and looking at her earnestly, "there are several ways of remembering. If I am not worthy of the place in your thoughts which I desire——"

"Of course, of course," she broke in hastily, "I shall always think highly of you; and when you are a famous musician it is you who will forget your unsatisfactory pupil, not your pupil who will forget you."

"Ursula," said Felix, "listen to me. Once upon a time a romantic youth fell in love with an equally romantic child. As

he watched her grow, so his love grew till it was too great and passionate to be hidden; while she was so sweet and simple that she made no secret of returning his love. However, she was so young, and he was so poor, that it would have been ridiculous to have spoken of the future; therefore he, being sure of his happiness, resolved to wait awhile. Since then time has passed, and he is scarcely further on the road to affluence, while his child-love has grown into womanhood, and learnt either womanly reserve, or has ceased to love him. He has been very patient, but now he wants to put an end to his uncertainty. Anything is better than a false hope. Ursula, what have you to say? Can you help him?"

He did not look hopeful, for while he had been speaking she had drawn away her hand.

"Felix," she said, softly, "I think the girl you speak of wants help more than the man."

"What do you mean, Ursula?"

"I mean many things which it is hard to explain. Suppose she sees that she made a mistake; suppose she is rather ashamed to be reminded of what she wishes had never been; suppose—— Oh, Felix, I am so very sorry for her!"

"For her?" he replied, with a bitter little smile; "for her? Well, yes, perhaps you are right. She is the more to be pitied of the two."

She had not expected him to take her words thus. She felt a little alighted.

"Dear, dear," she exclaimed, "just look at the clock. I must not stay another moment. Good-bye, Felix; say you forgive me for having been such a discreditable pupil. Forgive and forget."

He took her hand and smiled.

"Good-bye, Ursula," he said. "God bless you! and if I have ever said or done anything you would rather not remember, I, too, say: forgive and forget."

So she left him alone in the shabby room, where the afternoon sunlight was again sneering at the dowdy furniture. And when the twilight had stolen in and softened all the discrepancies, he still sat there, leaning his head on his hands, trying to realise what he had known for long—that his last shred of hope would shrivel away with the first breath of Ursula's decisive word.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER VI.

"I THINK you can help me, Draycott, if you will," says Dumphie.

"I think you know that if I can I will."

I am thrown off the lines at once, as it were. I have been expecting some tenderly veiled caution as to my presumptuous hopes; some manly, yet not unloving warning, that I have been of late living in a fool's paradise. Now he has appealed to me for help. Stay, though, I think, with a sudden sinking of the heart, this help may mean that he wants me to give up voluntarily all my goings and comings to and from Prospect Place—but Dumphie is speaking:

"I want to speak to you seriously, Draycott—about—Aunt Dacie."

Good Heavens! Aunt Dacie! Has Mr. Candytuft, now a widower, been showing signs of presumptuous hopes? Is it his too frequent appearance in Prospect Place that is to be discussed to-night?

"You see," Dumphie goes on, I listening in a still wonderment; "I have got on well, very well, in our house—I mean our place in the City. I hope it doesn't sound ridiculous to you that I should say 'our,' for it really is the case—I know it must seem strange to you—that our senior partner treats me quite confidentially, and really gives me such advantages—in a business point of view, you know—that I might almost as well be a junior partner in the concern."

Dumphie is still standing opposite me upon the rug, and looks to see me fall back in stark amaze at this announcement. His modest wonder at his own success; his evident feeling that some apology is needed for the fact of his chief—that blessed old curmudgeon!—treating him in so handsome a manner, touch me to my heart's core.

"You have worked hard for your position, I doubt not——"—and then, for the first time in my life—but not for the last by many a one—I call him, to his face, "Dumphie."

He does not notice the slip—if slip it can be called—he is too intent upon the subject-matter in hand.

"Yes," he says, "I have worked; I have tried to persevere. I never see how any one can ask Heaven's blessing on anything he undertakes, unless he puts all his back into it at the same time."

"Nor I. Besides, you have Scotch blood in your veins—that of itself means perseverance."

"Well, the great fact I want to impress upon you is, that my position now is better than anything that might or could have been expected for me."

"I don't see that. If old What's-his-name retired altogether, and made you senior partner, it wouldn't seem a bit too much for him to do—to my mind."

"My dear fellow!"

"Dear fellow as much as you like. But it's true, all the same."

"Well, well—and now to the business that brought me here to-night."

I take a long draw at the meerschaum. It is coming now, anyway, whatever it is.

"Finding that Aunt Dacie has been so confidential with you—has, in fact, chattered away to you so freely of us and our doings—makes things much easier; makes me feel

really hopeful that you will be ready and willing to back me up, that you will see things as I see them."

I nod. Nodding comes easier than speaking when you don't quite know what you are assenting to.

"The fact is, my dear Draycott, there are other places near London besides Prospect Place, N.W.," says Dumphie, in a sort of burst; "but the thing is, to convince my dear good aunt of the fact."

So—the cat is out of the bag. And what a harmless, purring sort of an animal it is after all! Instead of the young tiger that I had expected to rend and tear my heart with cruel claws, behold the "harmless, necessary cat" in the shape of a small, domestic plot on the part of Dumphie, for the removal of dear Aunt Dacie.

I run over with sympathy. I lay the meerschaum—which has really hitherto seemed something to cling to—on the table. I grasp the situation at once.

"You want her to leave her present home? You want to spend more money upon making her comfortable than you can well do while she lives in the house with the poplar-tree?"

His beaming, happy face! His perfect joy at being understood so thoroughly!

"Nothing can be more complete than we are," he says, gravely, facing me, having taken up a position with his back to the fire, "looked upon as a household. As to fun—why, you might hear us laughing a mile off. Mazie, in certain moods, is the most amusing little woman in the world. We quite frighten Aunt Dacie, I can tell you; there never were such happy people, you know—never! And even all the sad memories we hold in common only tie us all the closer together. I can tell you, I should feel leaving the old house myself terribly; still, it hardly seems right when my—ahem!—circumstances are what they are. I am sure you understand what I mean, Draycott; you seem to have got to understand us all so thoroughly. Why, only the other night I was saying to Aunt Dacie that we might have known you for years, you had become so much one of us. I really can't imagine what we should do without you, I can't indeed."

"What did Aunt Dacie say to that? I mean, about having, as it were, known me for years."

Dumphie looks a little flurried.

"Oh, she chimed in like anything, you know; but I fancied, though I'm sure I didn't know how it could have been——"

"Been what?"

"How there could have been anything in what I said to upset Mazie. She got quite flushed, you know; and though she never spoke, I thought I saw——"

"Saw what?"

I can see that Dumphie is surprised at my catching him up so sharply. I don't feel it is altogether polite in me to do so; and yet, for the life of me, I can't help it. I am longing, longing to know what my darling did and said! Had she no word to say for me? Could it be that the rest had grown to feel as though they had known Louis Draycott for years, and she alone had never learnt the lesson?

"I thought I saw, nay, I am sure I saw tears in her eyes as she turned and looked at me. Draycott, what a careless fellow you are! You've cracked that pipe-bowl, I'll be bound, knocking it over like that. There, I told you so."

He soon forgets about the bowl, and is eagerly telling me of his ill-luck—so far—in his suggestions to Miss Candace, as to a move westward.

"You know, my dear Draycott, the effect upon her of what I said was something dreadful. She reproached me in the bitterest manner. 'I thought you cared so much for this dear home of ours and all it holds,' she said, with the tears running down her cheeks; 'fancy any one else taking possession of the poplar-tree! Oh, Dumphie! I thought you loved the poplar-tree. Then, there is the Virginian creeper that I set in its tub with my own hands. It has reached the second floor now. I thought to live to see it touch the dormer, where dear Glennie always said he wanted it to climb to, and, besides, there is the window from which we watched your dear father away, and the room where Sister Charlotte died.'"

At this stage of the recital, Dumphie rumples all the sandy, brush-like hair upon his head up on end, and stands before me a troubled and anxious porcupine.

"What can a fellow do, my dear Draycott, when a woman goes on like that?"

"Aunt Dacie must think very highly of you," continues this best of good fellows, "to have told you so many things about us all. You really must have great influence with her; and I am sure you will use it."

"That indeed I will. But on my own behalf first, Dumphie—on my own behalf first."

He looks at me puzzled.

"Your own behalf?" he says.

And I answer:

"Yea. I want Aunt Dacie and you to give me your sister Mazie."

It is very evident that such an idea has never struck Dumphie before, and that now it strikes him so as almost to knock him over.

"Mazie?" he says, wonderingly, under his breath. "Why, Mazie is a child, and you——"

"A rugged-looking man, who has lived his life, you would say. Still, I am but thirty, as yet. And who could love her as I do?"

He hardly seems to hear me. He looks like a man who dreams, and who feels that the fancy will pass.

"It is only a little while ago since I used to carry her up the attic stairs, where we all played at Queen and courtiers. She is a child—she is our one darling."

"But you do not carry her upstairs now; she is tall and fair—like a lily. She shall be my one darling, too, if she will give herself to me, and I think she will—I think she will——"

It is I who feel like dreaming now. But I pull myself together.

"Now that I have told you—now that you know—will you give me one kind word? Will you bid me God-speed in my wooing?"

The bewilderment in Dumphie's face at the sound of the word "wooing," in connection with his sister Mazie, would be ludicrous if it were not pathetic. It is such a dear, troubled face that turns to me. His voice is near akin to tears.

"When my mother was dying she sent a message to me. It was this: 'Tell him to love his little sister always, and be good to her. Tell him I said so.' Those words have been garnered up in my heart all these long years. Draycott, I hardly think you know what Mazie has been to us all. I hardly think you know what a shock this is to me. How strange—how strange it seems that any one should want to take her from us! It will be like plucking the heart out of the home. It will be—— I don't know what it will be."

He leans his arms upon the mantelshelf, he covers his face with his hands.

It is a bad moment for both of us.

"Perhaps she will not care to leave you," I say haltingly, at last.

It is a lame attempt at consolation, as I feel even in the saying. He looks up at me; the sheen of tears is in his eyes; but a smile is about his mouth.

"Ah, yea," he says. "Mazie will leave us. I can look back now, Draycott, and read it all as plainly as though it were written in a book. Mazie has learnt her lesson well—the lesson that you have taught her."

I feel an awful brute to be unable to keep the light of a mad joy from blazing up into my eyes. It is one thing to hope a thing—even to believe a thing—and quite another to hear it said right out in so many words. I turn aside quickly; but Dumphie has seen, Dumphie knows all about it—has learnt more perhaps in that short glimpse than he could have done had I spoken volumes.

It is not much in my line to speak a great deal at any time, and the deeper I feel the less I can speak. With me, it is as Charles Kingsley has it: "Our mightiest feelings are always those which remain most unspoken."

Now my heart is full—full to bursting with passionate, fond thoughts, with high resolves, pathetically stirred into vivid life by the pure and beautiful drama of home affections unfolded before my eyes by each word and look of Dumphie's. Yet eloquence does not seem possible to me. It is in poor and halting words that I try to lay bare something of what is in my heart. Dumphie, too, is far from ready in his speech. To women, words are a welcome relief in any solemn crisis; to men, silence comes most easily.

Yet, when I go as far as the porter's gate with Dumphie, when I stand and watch his strong, square-built figure mix and mingle with the shadows, and the lamp-flare, and the few passers-by, I feel that, somehow, he knows a great deal more than any mere listener to our converse would suppose possible.

I think that both Dumphie and myself felt somewhat strained and over-wrought by our interview of to-night, and recognised the wisdom of it being no further prolonged.

"It is late," he had said, slipping his watch from his pocket; "I must make a start or I shall be scandalising Prospect Place to say nothing of finding Aunt Dacie with her nose flattened against the window, and full of fears that I have been run over and shall be presently carried round the corner on a stretcher."

He speaks lightly; but he is very pale and the strong, hearty hand-grasp that says so much between man and man, is given and returned in silence by both.

He is passing from my sight. He walks with his head a little bent—walks slowly, too—he, so brisk a man of business in all his ways. He is weighted with a burden of new and strange thoughts. I know that he is saying to himself: "My little girl—my little girl; Mazie, my little sister."

I watch him out of sight, and then stand there bareheaded at the wicket, George watching me with that bovine wonder common to his class when they see what they cannot comprehend, while Joseph Stubbs views me from a distance, doubtfully. I turn and look at the prison looming dark and blind with its windows without light, and its close-bound portal. The sense of the mass of sin, and sorrow, and bitter misery lurking behind those dark and dreadful walls, seems to come over me with a force and reality it has hardly ever had for me before. There is a fount of light, and hope, and joy in my own heart that makes the darkness of others gather blackness in my eyes.

I say good-night to George—who still stands by with open eyes and mouth—I doubt not, thinking that the Parson is a little off his head to-night, and, as I turn towards my own doorway, a voice—clear, childish, sweet—breaks the silence that reigns almost unbroken, even in that London street:

Through all the changing scenes of Life,
In trouble and in joy.

Soft and true ring out the words—the tune is one with a swing and a "go" about it, catching to the ear.

"Please, air, it's t' little wench singing to father; he's a bit tetchy to-night, and nowt else serves him."

George says this apologetically; but, to me, words and tune are alike welcome.

What changing scenes have I not been led through; what trouble; and now, O Heaven, I thank thee, through what joy unspeakable!

Talking to Dumphie has made my hope and my content seem very real. Hitherto there has been something dreamy about it all; but, to set them forth clothed in a garment of words, to hear Dumphie say that, looking back, he can read my darling's heart, and can see that she has learnt to love me. All this makes the wondrous beauty of this new light and life that Heaven is making possible for me, a thing as real as the warmth of the blessed sun, as the beauty of the flowers, as the song of a thousand happy birds.

Good night, Mazie, good night, my darling! If I am writing here words that your dear eyes may one day read, then I may trace what sweet folly I will, for to you it will not be folly; but the precious utterance of the heart that holds you dear beyond the power of any words to tell. "Herz meines Herzens—Gott sei mit dir!"

M. JANSSEN'S CLIMB.

EVERYBODY given to high mountaineering may be supposed to have a motive for the same, although it is sometimes difficult to guess it.

Not a few may do it for no better reason than that their friends have done it before them; just as, to cite an ancient simile, when one sheep jumps a gap in a hedge, all the other sheep jump after it.

Is it to enjoy the view seen from aloft? As often as not, the summit, when reached, is veiled by mist and cloud; and when clear, the higher the mountain top, the less of the distant panorama is to be seen. Elderly fogies, who cannot get a quarter so high, have a fuller enjoyment of Alpine scenery. The most picturesque aspect of a landscape is not obtained from a bird's-eye view. Moreover, when a false step, a slip, or a stumble may cost a man his life, he cannot spare even half an eye for the beauties of nature.

Does he want to breathe a purer atmosphere? Very good; he can easily do so without reaching an altitude where the air is so rare that boiling water wouldn't cook a potato or scald a pig, if he had them there.

Conscious as he is of danger, he is angry if a hint of foolhardiness is uttered. He may be reminded, however, without offence, that his life belongs not to himself alone, but to his parents, friends, and perhaps his sweetheart.

While hunting after an Edelweiss or a gentian to stick in his hat-band, he ruthlessly pulls it up by the roots, although he will fail to make it grow afterwards; not knowing, probably, that at the Geneva Botanic Garden he can buy established Alpine plants which will travel safely. Or, perhaps, not having a private treadmill on which to take exercise at home, he thinks the Jungfrau or the Matterhorn will supply a healthy substitute.

With all these different reasons for climbing, you will never conjecture, in a hundred guesses, why Monsieur Janssen,

the eminent astronomer, went up Mont Blanc in October last; so I will tell you at once what induced him to do so. M. Janssen climbed in search of oxygen.

Of oxygen? Was none to be had at the hotel in Chamounix where he was staying? Yes, certainly; and plenty of it, of excellent quality, without ringing for the waiter and ordering it; otherwise, he would hardly have survived to tell his tale. But the oxygen of Savoy was not his affair. What he wanted to find was solar oxygen—oxygen in the sun.

Mr. Janssen is an "astronome physicien," a physical astronomer—that is, he wants to know of what materials the heavenly bodies are made—as well as an astronomer in the usual sense of the word; and the question whether oxygen is present in the sun, or not, justly occupies the attention of physical astronomers.

Oxygen plays so considerable a part in the constitution of the terrestrial crust and the rocks of which it is composed, as well as of the fluids which form its oceans and its atmosphere; it is so all-powerful an agent in the manifestations of life, that the determination of its presence, whether in the sun or in other stars, is of the highest importance.

Now, it may be briefly stated, that the presence of oxygen in our own atmosphere is betrayed by spectral analysis, and the difficulty lay in deciding whether its characteristic marks in the solar spectrum were occasioned by atmospheric oxygen exclusively or by oxygen existing in the sun.

A solution of the problem was hoped to be obtained from observations made on the earth's surface, on the plain, compared with those at a station elevated enough to have beneath it a considerable portion of our atmosphere; also, by obtaining a spectrum free from the marks peculiar to watery vapour. Observations, securing those conditions, would have to be made in very cold weather and in a very rare atmosphere. M. Janssen, consequently, was led to select both a lofty station and an advanced epoch of the year.

Nothing seemed more admirably suited for the purpose than the grand, massive pile of Mont Blanc, now French territory. On one of the most elevated and most interesting points of this mass stands a place of refuge, or shelter, called "Les Grands Mulets," at the junction of the two principal glaciers which descend from Mont Blanc, at an elevation of nearly ten thousand feet.

This combination of circumstances promised most favourably for the atmospheric purity and the low temperature required. In October, the day temperature of the atmosphere falls far below the freezing point of the thermometer.

But the ascent to the Grands Mulets, at that season of the year, presented special difficulties. The refuge had been abandoned for some little time, and a great quantity of snow had recently fallen, effacing the foot-paths, masking the crevasses, and rendering progress extremely toilsome; while the severe cold, in those exalted regions, necessitated exceptional arrangements in order that any prolonged stay should be possible.

After consulting the chief of the guides—selected from the most experienced of that body of men—and a careful examination of the project, it was decided that the expedition, though very difficult, was not absolutely impracticable. A detachment of well-trained guides and mountaineers were sent forward to reconnoitre the path and mark the track which the expedition should follow from Pierre-à-l'Echelle, situated at the entrance of the glacier, up to the cabin of the Grands Mulets, where the observations would have to be made.

This preliminary work, extremely laborious, was also not without its dangers. The men, often up to their waists in snow, could only indicate in a general manner the path to be followed on the morrow.

As the distance from Pierre-Pointue to the Grands Mulets—with its difficulties amidst blocks of ice produced by the meeting of the Glacier des Bossons with that of Tacconnaz—was beyond M. Janssen's bodily strength, he was obliged to contrive an apparatus by which he could be carried a good portion of the way.

It was simply a sort of ladder, twelve or thirteen feet long, whose extremities rested on the shoulders of four or six bearers. The traveller takes his place in the middle, between two of the steps of the ladder, on a light seat, suspended by leather straps, short enough for his arms to be above the woodwork, and free. At the spots where it is absolutely necessary to walk, the traveller can set foot on the ground without quitting his position in the middle of the ladder, and the support under his armpits, given by the uprights of the apparatus, enormously diminishes his fatigue.

If a crevasse be met with, the ladder can be laid across it, and so facilitate the passage. Lastly, when circumstances are

imperative, the traveller, well covered with wraps, can stretch himself at full length on the wooden frame-work, and so be carried, as a sedan-chair is carried, by his troop of porters.

The instruments, taken out of their cases, had been distributed in pieces, which allowed of their transport on men's backs, with due regard to the difficulties of the ascent. Provisions sufficient for several days' maintenance of the whole troop were also carried to the chalet. When every preliminary was finished, they started from Chamounix on the morning of the twelfth, with mules, up to Pierre-Pointue for their leader and the baggage, in order to husband the porters' strength. They spent the night at the chalet of Pierre-Pointue, and at six in the morning of the thirteenth the expedition set off for its final destination.

From the chalet of Pierre-Pointue to the spot called Pierre-à-l'Échelle, the path rises rapidly amongst rocks belonging to the Aiguille du Midi, and the moraines of the Glacier des Bossons. It then skirts the foot of the Aiguille du Midi—a dangerous place in the guides' estimation, on account of avalanches and falling stones. Then you pass over the glacier itself, at a part of it where the ice forms a sort of undulating plain, but slightly fissured. As M. Janssen could there be carried, they advanced regularly, without great fatigue. But arrived at a point, which the guides call the "Jonction," progress became much less easy.

The crossing over the crevasses, the incessant ups and downs in the midst of ice-blocks, scattered pell-mell and buried in snow, demanded gymnastic efforts which youthful limbs alone could make. With great perseverance, and frequent rests, thanks to the devotion of the guides, they managed, after several hours' toil, to extricate themselves from that ugly chaos.

They had then to surmount the slopes of the Tacconnaz glacier, which pass in front of the Grands Mulets rock, against which the cabin is placed. The path winds round wide fissures there, and mounts, with frequent zig-zags, up to the foot of the rock. After that, the only obstacles encountered were the depth of the snow and the narrowness of the path, which prevented the employment of the ladder.

Night overtook them before they reached the Grands Mulets; in fine weather, the distance is traversed in four or five hours. They continued the ascent

with the help of lanterns. On an incline, where the path, widening, permitted the use of his machine, M. Janssen was carried, which relieved him a little. At the foot of a rock, he was again obliged to walk. Ten minutes afterwards, he entered the cabin, where the guides had provided fire and food; but the extraordinary efforts he had been compelled to make, prevented him from swallowing a morsel of nourishment. Amateur unscientific climbers, no doubt, have experienced the same effects of over-fatigue.

The cabin of the Grands Mulets is a structure of dry stone and woodwork, leaning against a rock which rises between the Bossons and the Tacconnaz glaciers, formed on the slopes of Mont Blanc, and before their junction. It is a sufficient shelter for the use of passing tourists during summer; but it requires great improvement to make it suitable for a lengthened stay, especially in autumn and winter. Nevertheless, it is a station of great interest, both for researches like those M. Janssen was pursuing, and for studying the physical and mechanical phenomena presented by glaciers; for, being situated in their midst, it commands a perfect view of all around them.

Next day, the fourteenth, the instruments were set in order and the preliminary observations made. It was feared that propitious weather might have long to be awaited; but in the very night after the day of preparation the sky cleared, promising all that could be wished for. In fact, on the fifteenth, the sun rose in a sky of more admirable purity than had been observed since the beginning of the year. A continued series of observations was made from ten in the morning until sunset.

For the technical and scientific detail of those observations, the reader must be referred to M. Janssen's own account in this year's "Annuaire of the Bureau des Longitudes." Their result was that the stripes and bands in the spectrum caused by oxygen are exclusively due to what is contained in the earth's atmosphere. The solar atmosphere has nothing to do with the phenomenon, which is entirely terrestrial.

Must we thence conclude that oxygen does not enter into the composition of the solar globe? At the earlier stages of spectral analysis we should have been tempted to come to that conclusion; at the present day, astronomers have learnt to be more

reserved. They do not maintain, as Whewell once did, that throughout the whole range of the boundless universe, our own little globe was the only world inhabited, or habitable, by a human race or any other living creature.

Oxygen, existing in the strata lying deep beneath the photosphere and the spots on the sun, would not betray itself by any manifestations accessible to the present methods of spectral analysis. All we can say is that oxygen does not exist in the solar atmosphere in a condition which would produce in the spectrum the same manifestations as it exhibits in our earthly atmosphere.

The belief has been already expressed that astronomy, and especially physical astronomy, will be more and more induced to make use of elevated observatory stations. Ever since the marvellous progress of optical and mechanical art has allowed the construction of instruments continually increasing in size and power, and which will soon be colossal, the conditions of successful observation are changed. An atmosphere of exceptional purity is absolutely necessary, otherwise the high powers of the instruments cannot be utilised.

And thus the astronomy of the future, by working on lofty mountain-tops, will advantageously attack the grand problem, old as science itself, suggested by the visible splendours of the firmament, namely—whether the stars are inhabited, whether life exists outside and beyond the earth, and creatures like ourselves and our fellows dwell in other worlds—a problem hitherto unsolved. Physical astronomy is preparing the methods which promise to solve it, slowly, but surely and successfully.

Already, the presence of watery vapour—that primary element of organised life—has been discovered in the planetary atmospheres. The existence in them of oxygen—a not less vital element—will probably be demonstrated by recent discoveries. When these and other researches have been completed, science will then be able to pronounce with certainty whether the worlds which revolve around us are habitable or not.

PERCH.

"PERCA FLUVIATILIS" comes of a very ancient stock, and may boast of having made good his quarters in almost every country of the known world without

changing his name. He is to be met with throughout the whole of Europe, including Great Britain; though in Scotland, for some reason not easy to be understood, it is rare to fall in with him north of the Firth of Forth, while he ceases entirely amongst the innumerable waters of Sutherlandshire and Ross. His name contains a reference to that dark blue colour which is assumed by grapes and olives when ripening, and is probably associated with the sable bands wherewith the fish's back is barred; but Mr. Manley finds fault with the naming of the perch, and prefers the old English word for him, "Beare" or "Bars." "The Pearch is a fish that is hook-backt something like a hog, and armed with stiff gristles, and his sides with thick scales." Such, at least, is the description of him given by an old writer who fails, nevertheless, to do justice to one of the most beautiful of the fish of our islands. Pope, though in erroneous and perhaps exaggerated terms, thus belauds the brilliancy of his appearance:

The bright-eyed Perch with fins of Tyrian dye, and Frank Buckland, speaking of him, declares that "no lady's dress was ever made so beautiful as that of a perch when he is in full season. His cuirass of scales is formed of a lovely bronze, with transverse bars of dark green bronze, while the whole is shaded with a lovely peacock iridescence. His fins are coloured with a lovely tinge of red, such as we may sometimes see in the glass of very old church windows, or occasionally in Salvati's beautiful glass. Artists would do well to study the colouring of the perch; they will not find such brilliancy of colour, or such a combination of tints in any flower."

Some of the family, however, are marine; and amongst his many cousins "*Perca fluviatilis*" can reckon such charming members of finny society as the "Weever" or "sea-dragon," pronounced to be excellent food, though it must be owned that we hear far more frequently of the piquancy of the spines than of that of the fish. No fish wounds are so much dreaded as those of the weever; and Bernardinus Castellata of Genoa announces as the result of indefatigable investigation that the only certain cure for them is—neither excision nor the actual cautery—but to rub the torn flesh with a compost of the same fish in vinegar, and then to bind tight over the spot the head of a salted mullet. The "Labrax," or "sea-wolf," is another member of the family of "*Percidæ*," so also is the hideous

"Stargazer" of the Mediterranean, whose gall was in such high reputation for removing specks from the cornea, that it has even been suggested that Tobit's blindness was caused by it; and among others who also claim kinship with "*Perca fluviatilis*" is the Nile perch, which even the crocodile is said to eschew. Neither must we omit all reference to the acrobatic performances of "*Perca scandens*," a small, scaly variety, seldom over seven inches long; the climbing perch, a native of some parts of the East, which not only travels over land, but actually ascends trees in pursuit of the crustaceans upon which he feeds. The structure of the fish particularly fits it for the exercise of this remarkable instinct, inasmuch as it is armed with a number of spines, serving for hands, by which it can suspend itself, and by which it is enabled to wriggle its way upward.

In consequence of the structure of the gill-cover, which prevents the delicate membranes from becoming dry, the perch can live long out of water; and if carried loosely among wet sedgy grass in a coarse wicker basket, through the interstices of which the air can freely circulate, will undergo a journey even from London to Inverness without serious injury. In Roman Catholic countries where these fish constantly make their appearance at market, when they are not sold they are returned to the ponds from whence they came, to be reproduced at another opportunity. Perch can be frozen and thawed again; and are said to have been transferred from place to place in a frozen condition without injury to life.

The skin of the perch is very thick; and Linnaeus describes how the skill of the Laps enables them to convert it into glue. "Some of the largest fish being flayed, the skins are first dried, and then soaked in cold water, so that the scales can be rubbed off. Four or five of the skins being wrapped together in a bladder or in a piece of birch bark, so that no water can get at them, are set on the fire in a pot of water to boil, a stone being laid over the pot to keep in the heat. Thus prepared, the skins furnish a very strong glue, so that articles joined with it will never separate again."

The gastronomic attractions of the fish are familiar to most riparians; and Galen prescribed perch as especially wholesome for invalids:

Though river fed,
No daintier fish in ocean's pastures bred.

Isaac Walton mentions a German proverb: "More wholesome than a peach of Rhine," and quotes a learned authority to show that it is the possessor of a small stone in the head, which is thought to be very "medicinal," and which was at one time an ingredient in the Pharmacopoeia. The spawning season is at the end of April or beginning of May; and so prolific is the fish that a specimen, weighing only a quarter of a pound, has been found to contain two hundred and eighty thousand eggs. The ancients maintained that this fish was self-productive; but according to Professor Owen the milt and the roe are single in the different sexes. The ova are deposited in strings which hang about the weeds, and when seen in the bright sunlight, glitter like festoons of pearls. Perch spawn has been observed to vivify in confinement in from a week to seventeen or eighteen days. At certain seasons, perch seem liable to outbreaks of epidemic disease; thus in 1867 a perch plague occurred which destroyed hundreds of thousands in the Lake of Geneva, owing, as is supposed, to the presence of fungi in the blood. The disease has been named "Perch Typhus," and occurs not unfrequently in England.

Amongst Continental rivers the Rhine and Danube stand pre-eminent for this fish, which Lapland also produces plentifully. The Swiss Lakes, also, were early known to supply very fine perch; but it is doubtful whether a genuine specimen was ever taken from a Swiss lake larger than one fattened in the Serpentine, which attained, if Yarrell may be credited, the weight of nine pounds; though this falls short of a Lapland monster, cited by the same author, which measured twelve inches from the extremity of the nose to the edge of the gill-cover.

Walton says that he knew of one taken by a friend, which measured two feet in length; and in the "Sure Angler's Guide," he saw the figure of a perch drawn on the door of a house, near Oxford, which was twenty-nine inches long, and which he was informed was the outline of a living fish. Perch of two or three pounds are by no means uncommon, and specimens of even four pounds are probably less rare than may be supposed. They are of somewhat slow growth, and Cuvier considered that a perch of seven inches long was probably a three-year-old.

A very swift current is an abomination to "*Perca fluviatilis*," who finds in lakes, or the deeper and less rapid pools of rivers,

more agreeable places of abode. They usually go in large shoals, which may frequently be perceived with the naked eye if brought down to the surface, when the water is still; and Mr. Pennell says that he has known oil to be cast upon the troubled wavelets with the object of producing an artificial calm, to facilitate observations of this nature.

O'Gorman* describes "*Perca fluviatilis*" as fond of noise, and even sensible of the charms of music. One of his sons, he tells us, assured him that he had seen a vast shoal of perch appear at the surface, attracted by the sounds of the pipes of a Highland regiment, which happened to be marching over a neighbouring bridge, and that they remained until the sound died away in the distance.

It has been said that the friendship supposed to exist between perch and tench, and that "tyrant of the watery plains, "*Esox Lucius*," would be singular were it not explicable without having recourse to animal magnetism, by the slime of the one, and the dorsal fin, rough skin, and closely-set scales of the other.

On the Nile, as has been already remarked, the crocodile—a tyrant mightier even than the pike—exhibits the same forbearing favour to the local perch, no doubt from some similarly cogent reason. Little wonder that the Saxons should have exhibited one of their divinities standing with naked feet on a perch's back as an emblem of patience in adversity and constancy in the hour of trial. It is somewhat remarkable that a young perch, from which the dorsal fin has been removed, should be one of the surest baits for pike; perhaps because the "wary Luce," delighted at finding "*Perca fluviatilis*" unarmed, seizes upon the opportunity of feeding on a luxury which he is so seldom able to obtain.

Like many people of one's acquaintance, when he has everything to his liking, and especially after enjoying a comfortable meal of the small red worms constituting the savoury meat which his soul pre-eminently loves, the perch can afford to feel easy-tempered, and sheathe that great weapon of offence and defence, his first dorsal fin. But let anything occur to annoy him, and his temper is—to put it mildly—uncertain; and his spines are at once erected, and bristle like "quills upon the fretful porcupine." That they are very

formidable weapons is proved from an instance cited by Mr. Pennell as having occurred in a stock-pond near Weybridge, when one of these fish, of some half-pound weight, attacked a jack of the same size; the result being that, after a prolonged contest, carried on with much fury, the latter was apparently killed or stunned, and lay motionless at the bottom, belly uppermost. As to these spines, Mr. Manley remarks that he can hardly decide which is easiest to handle with any substantial comfort, "a perch, a red-hot coal, or a lively hedgehog."

To what extent, however, the spines of "*Perca fluviatilis*" protect him from the assaults of other fish, especially pike, is a question by no means finally decided. It must be borne in mind that "*Esox Lucius*" always swallows his prey head foremost, whilst the spines of the perch can only protect backwards, and shut down, like the ribs of a furled umbrella, upon pressure from the front; it would appear, therefore, provided always that good aim has been taken—for a perch swallowed sideways would, without doubt, be a very serious affair indeed—that they could not impede the operation of swallowing, but that, on the contrary, they would rather assist it than otherwise, on the principle that an ear of barley is helped by the beard, even where right of way is not resolutely refused, as, for instance, up one's coat-sleeve.

The effect of the peculiar "*chevaux de frise*" wherewith the perch's back is armed, receives further illustration from the manner in which pike are frequently caught in Sweden. Large perch swallow the baited hooks of night lines, and the hooked fish are, in their turn, gorged by voracious pike. In this case it is obviously impossible that the perch can be devoured head foremost; but on the line being drawn in, the spikes set so fast in the pike's throat that he is unable to rid himself of them, and thus captive and captor fall a prey together.

A very remarkable instance of the voracity of the perch is recorded by Mr. Pennell as having occurred to him when fishing in Windermere. In removing the hook from the fish's jaws, one eye was accidentally displaced and remained adhering to it. The maimed perch, being small, was returned to the lake, and, minnows being scarce, the line thrown in again with the eye attached as bait. The quivering quill almost instantly disappeared, and the new-comer, on being

* "Practice of Angling," ii. 2.

landed, turned out to be the one-eyed perch, which had fallen a prey to his own lost organ of vision. A conclusive proof, it is fair to assume, that the structure of cold-blooded animals enables them to endure injuries, even of the severest character, without experiencing material inconvenience.

But one-eyed perch are actually to be found existing in British waters, and Mr. Stoddart tells us that he had himself caught very many such in Dunse Castle Loch; and not in fact only, but in fiction also, figures the one-eyed perch. Many may recall how, in "My Novel," Dr. Riccabocca angled daily for his one-eyed perch, though his constancy and perseverance did not—unless memory be deceitful—meet with their accustomed reward.

The perch of Malham Water, in Craven, Yorkshire, become totally blind after a certain age—a hard yellow film covering the whole surface of the eye; yet they frequently attain a weight of five pounds, and are only to be taken by a net that sweeps the bottom, where they feed on loaches, millers' thumbs, etc.

Linnaeus also described a deformed variety of perch, the back greatly elevated and the tail distorted, which he found at Fahlen, in Sweden, and other lakes in the north of Europe. Specimens of deformed perch are also found in Llyn Raithlyn, Merionethshire; and albino perch, almost white, have been met with in the waters of different soils.

There are several ways of fishing for perch; but paternostering from a punt is, perhaps, the most successful. In bright, hot, calm weather, the fish may be angled for with a fly; and a showy one, with plenty of tinsel about the body, is most to be commended. Perch are by no means difficult to tame, and Mr. Jesse succeeded, after a few days only, in inducing some to feed from his hand.

So closely allied to "*Perca fluviatilis*" in appearance and form, as by some to be deemed a hybrid between perch and gudgeon, is a member of the family found chiefly in rivers, the Ruffe, or Rough ("*Acerina vulgaris*"), so called from the hard, unpleasant feel of the scales. This fish—called also the Pope, though the reason for the name is not very clear—is said to have been first discovered in England by Dr. Caius, founder of the College of the same name at Cambridge, who was physician to Edward the Sixth, and afterwards to his sister Mary, and Elizabeth.

Much sagacity is capable of being exhibited by this little fish; and Mr. Keene relates how a specimen in his aquarium, attracted by some cray-fish which had been placed therein, seized and attempted to swallow a miniature lobster some half an inch in length. The cray-fish immediately darted backward with a powerful sweep of its broad little tail, whereupon the Ruffe withdrew for awhile; but, shortly returning to the charge, selected a much smaller cray-fish, which lay recumbent, and apparently unconcerned. This time *Acerina* approached his prey from behind, and, securing the powerful tail, managed to devour the kicking cray-fish, as one would, if obliged, prefer to swallow a fork—handle first.

Fish, especially when kept together for any length of time, are found to exhibit considerable attachment for each other. An instance of such in the case of the Ruffe species is referred to in "Phil. Trans.," vol. ix.: About Christmas two Ruffes were placed together in a jar of water, and some time in the month of May following, the gentleman to whom they belonged gave one of them away. For three weeks the solitary survivor refused food, but ultimately being sent off to the friend on whom his companion had been bestowed, commenced to eat again immediately, and very speedily recovered its former liveliness.

A cruel habit, originating probably in some idea connected with Roman Catholic persecution, is practised about Windsor. A cork being pressed tightly down upon the dorsal fin, the fish is turned loose; the Pope dives, and swims away merrily, but, immediately he ceases swimming, the bung brings him to the top of the water. Astonished and frightened, he dives again, once more to be brought to the surface. The dead bodies of Popes which have been thus cruelly "plugged," as it is termed, are frequently seen floating down the waters of the "silent highway."

The Ruffe, according to Walton, "is an excellent fish to entice a young angler, for he is a greedy biter." Mr. Pennell records how, for a bet, he succeeded in drawing one of these little fish (usually four or five inches long) out of a pondlet, where he was observed to be lying, although he was at the time unprovided with rod, line, hook, or bait. A neighbouring hazel-bush supplied the first; the second was manufactured from the beard of the "bettee;" the hook was extemporised with a pin

borrowed from a passer-by; while a worm was speedily unearthed from beneath a fallen log.

*Ay me! what perils do environ
The fish that meddles with cold iron.*

In less than five minutes the tiny "Acerina" lay quivering on the turf, a victim to misplaced confidence and an empty larder.

LEGAL BANTER AND REPARTÉE.

JEFFREYS, the afterwards notorious Chief Justice and Chancellor, was once retained on a trial, in the course of which he had to cross-examine a sturdy countryman, clad in the usual habiliments of a labourer, and, finding the evidence telling against his client, he endeavoured to disconcert the witness by exclaiming in his own bluff manner:

"You fellow in the leathern doublet, what have you been paid for swearing?"

This, however, did not answer his purpose; for the man looked him straight in the face, and replied:

"Truly, sir, if you have no more for lying than I have for swearing, you might wear a leathern doublet as well as I."

In another case he was matched by an equally smart witness. Cross-examining a gentleman, who frequently used the terms lessor, lessee, assignor, and assignee, he was led to exclaim:

"There, you have been with your assignor and assignee, lessor and lessee. Do you know what a lessor or lessee is? I question if you do, with all your formal evidence."

"Yes, but I do," replied the witness; "and I will give you an instance. If you nod to me you are the nodder, and if I nod to you, you are the noddee."

This would probably satisfy the counsel that the man knew what he was talking about.

When the same legal light was Recorder, he was once taking part in an action brought by a party of musicians who sought to recover payment for certain services which they had rendered at a wedding. One of the plaintiffs was very much annoyed by the Recorder frequently addressing him with: "I say, fiddler; here, you fiddler!" Shortly afterwards, when called upon to give evidence, he described himself as a "musicianer," upon which Jeffreys asked what difference there was between a "musicianer" and a "fiddler." This afforded the witness an opportunity

for squaring accounts; so he informed the counsel that there was "as much difference between the two as between a pair of bagpipes and a Recorder."

Serjeant Cockle had the tables neatly turned upon him on one occasion by a witness whom he was cross-examining in a trial respecting the right of fishing in certain waters.

"Dost thou love fish?" was the simple question propounded to the witness; but it elicited a reply which the Serjeant little anticipated from that quarter.

"Ay," replied the witness, with a smile; "but I donna like 'cockle' sauce with it!"

Dunning was once treated to a somewhat similar reply. He was examining a witness, whom he asked if he did not live at the very verge of the court, and received a reply in the affirmative.

"And, pray, why have you selected such a spot for your residence?" asked the counsel.

"In the vain hope of escaping the rascally impertinence of 'dunning,'" was the unexpected answer.

On another occasion the same counsel met with a stinging retort. Having dealings with a gentleman whose nose was of a somewhat peculiar type, he said to him:

"Now, Mr. Coppernose, you have been sworn, what do you say?"

"Why, upon my oath," replied the witness, "I would not exchange my copper nose for your brazen face."

We are not informed what influence, if any, this evidence had upon the Judge. He would probably be satisfied as to the veracity of the woman in the following case, assuming that the cross-examination be correctly reported.

"Was he a tall man?" he asked.

"Not very tall, your honour; much about the size of your worship's honour," replied the witness.

"Was he good-looking?"

"Quite contrary; much like your honour; but with a handsomer nose!"

"Did he squint?"

"A little, your worship; but not so much as your honour by a good deal."

This, we presume, is one of those cases in which comparisons would prove odious.

Serjeant Davy was once questioning a gentleman who had appeared at the Court of King's Bench to give bail in the sum of three thousand pounds; and, wishing to display his wit, he asked him in a stern manner:

"And pray, sir, how do you make out that you are worth three thousand pounds?"

The gentleman thereupon furnished him with particulars of his property up to two thousand nine hundred and forty pounds, upon which the Serjeant remarked:

"That's all very good; but you want sixty pounds more to be worth three thousand."

"For that sum," replied the gentleman, in no way disconcerted, "I have a note of hand of one Mr. Serjeant Davy, and I hope he will have the honesty soon to settle it."

Upon this, Lord Mansfield observed, in his usual polite manner:

"Well, brother Davy, I think we may accept the bail."

Lord Kenyon, when trying a case respecting the non-fulfilment of a contract on a large scale for shoes, the principal question in which was "whether the shoes were well and soundly made with the best materials," asked a witness, pointing to his own shoes: "Were the shoes anything like these?" "No, my lord," was the reply, "they were a good deal better and more genteeler."

Garrow, in cross-examining a witness in the Court of King's Bench, asked him if he were not a fortune-teller.

"I am not," replied the man, "but I can tell yours."

"What is that to be?" enquired Garrow.

"Why, sir, as you made your first speech at the Old Bailey, so you will make your last there."

Abraham Moore was once examining Dr. Brodum, a notorious quack, and desirous of making something out of the name, said to him: "Your name is Brodum, I believe." The doctor nodded assent, and the counsel then asked: "Pray, how do you spell it—Bro-dum, or Broad-hum?" This provoked some merriment in court, which increased when the quack replied, with admirable self-possession: "Why, sare, as I be but a doctor, I spell my name Bro-dum; but if I were a bar-rister, I should spell it Broad-hum!"

Another lawyer, questioning a witness respecting the whereabouts of a ship at a particular time, and being informed that she was then in quarantine, displayed his geographical knowledge by enquiring: "And pray, sir, where is Quarantine?"

On one occasion Serjeant Whitaker was

conducting an examination at the bar of the House of Lords, when he put a question to the witness which gave rise to some objections, and a debate of two hours ensued as to the propriety of the same. At the end of that time, Whitaker was readmitted, and was desired to put the question over again, but he merely replied: "Upon my word, my lords, it is so long since I first put the question, that I entirely forget it; but, with your leave, I'll now put another."

In the reign of George the Second, an eminent counsel, named Crowle, made an observation before an election committee which was considered to reflect upon the House of Commons, and he was therefore summoned to the bar of that House and forced to his knees to receive a reprimand from the Speaker. As he rose, he took out his handkerchief, and, wiping his knees, coolly remarked, "That it was the dirtiest house he had ever been in in his life."

The passes between bench and bar are also plentiful, and equally amusing. A story is told of Sir Fletcher North to the effect that, in addressing a court on some question of manorial rights, he happened to say:

"My lord, I can instance the point in my own person. Now, my lord, I have myself two little manors."

Here Lord Mansfield interposed, with one of his blindest smiles: "We are well aware of that, Sir Fletcher."

This same Judge prided himself on his power of discovering very early in a case its true bearings, and was in the habit of taking up a book or newspaper before the counsel had completed their arguments. On one occasion, when he did this, Dunning, who was addressing the court, paused in his argument; upon which Lord Mansfield said, without raising his eyes from his book:

"Pray go on, Mr. Dunning; pray go on."

To this the advocate replied, in a sarcastic manner:

"I wait your lordship's pleasure. I fear I shall disturb your lordship's more important occupation; I will wait till your lordship has leisure to attend to my client and his humble advocate."

Curran was once engaged in an exciting argument with a Judge when the latter said: "If you say another word, sir, I'll commit you."

"Then, my lord," replied the witty counsel, "it will be the best thing you'll have committed this year."

At the trial of Horne Tooke, Sir John Scott, who prosecuted as attorney-general, declared that, in instituting the prosecution, he had been guided by the dictates of his conscience, and expressed a hope that after he was gone his children might feel that in leaving them an example of public probity, he had left them an inheritance far more precious than any acquisition of property or honour he could bequeath to them. During this speech Sir John shed tears; and, to the surprise of the court, Mitford, the solicitor-general, wept also.

"What on earth," said some one to Tooke, "can Mitford be crying for?"

"At the thought of the little inheritance that poor Scott is likely to leave his children," was Tooke's reply.

A story is told of a well-known lawyer addressing a jury respecting a chimney being on fire, and in the course of his address, exclaiming: "Gentlemen, the chimney took fire; it poured forth volumes of smoke. Volumes did I say?—whole encyclopædias!"

Witty and humorous remarks also frequently pass among the legal fraternity outside the law courts. Lord Ellenborough was dining one day at an Assize dinner, when some one offered to help him to some fowl.

"No, I thank you," said his lordship; "I mean to try that beef."

"If you do, my lord," said Jekyll, "it will be hung beef."

Serjeant Davy was accused on one occasion of having disgraced the bar by taking silver from a client. "I took silver," he explained, "because I could not get gold; but I took every farthing the fellow had in the world; and I hope you don't call that disgracing the profession."

One night as Erskine was coming out of the House of Commons, he was stopped by a member going in, and asked:

"Who's up, Erskine?"

"Windham," was the reply.

"What's he on?" was the next question.

"His legs," said the witty advocate; a reply which would scarcely satisfy the desire for political information.

of my life was that in the course of which I became convinced that the very pretty girl with whom I had been on tender terms for a month or more, was of no more steadfast principles than other pretty girls. In very many fewer minutes than it takes me to write this paper, she gave me to understand that I had served her turn. I had amused her, more or less; had been an admirable substitute for a nurse or a great-grandmother, as chaperon at the theatre, in the park, and on sundry festive occasions when it would have been indecorous for her to have appeared unattended; fetched and carried for her like the best trained of retrievers; and, lastly, though not least in the force of its irritation, been made excellently available as a decoy for the capture of a fellow man who, in the world's parlance, was a much better match than myself.

But what a pleasant month it was precedent to this overwhelming, humiliating quarter of an hour! She gave me warning. I am bound to say this much. But it had no effect on me. "Life is too short," I read in the one letter she wrote to me when I had known her a week, "to make it worth while ever disagreeing with each other. Let us enjoy a good time together while we are together. And, afterwards don't let us have a deluge, but sweet forgetfulness, or remembrances, as the case may be. I guess you will go your way, and I will go mine; but if you are sensible you will just look at it in this light."

Calm reconsideration of these words in her letter shows me clearly that she was less to blame than I for the bitter disenchantment I had to undergo. And yet, had she the right to invite me to the peril that experience had well taught her every man had to face who was in her society but a single hour? The right? Bah! A pretty girl is the most merciless of despots. At the time, one knows little, and cares less, about her heart. Her sweet face is everything; and the smiles that warm one's life-blood like no other elixir. But afterwards, when the sweet face is out of sight, reflection puts two and two together, and then truth will out.

It took place at a pension in Rome. You all know the kind of habitation, I dare say. Externally, the house was as cheerful as Newgate, which it resembled also in strength and architecture. It was in a good street, within ten minutes' walk of the middle of the Corso. We were, in fact, intensely respectable, as Signora

SOME DISAGREEABLE EXPERIENCES.

It is as odious to compare one disagreeable experience with another as to compare individuals. I confess, however, that I think quite the worst quarter of an hour

X——, who kept the establishment, told us twice a day—at the midday breakfast, for example, and when we dined in the evening. A Duke sat opposite to us at table. He was a married Duke, and he was poor. But he had elegant manners, and he intrigued, with complete success, to attract the notice of my fair neighbour. She saw that I did not very much like her warmth of tone when she addressed the Duke; and thereafter, while the Duke was in the pension, she could not have treated a favourite brother more tenderly than she treated him. I had one comfort in this affair. The Duchess was on my side. Any girl, except an American, would have been annihilated by the expression the Duchess assumed when she gazed at her husband's *vis-à-vis*. But she was not so easily frightened. She made remarks to me about the ridiculous appearance of the Duchess, and at the same time compelled the Duke to fidget with ecstacy at the fascination of her smiles.

It was the same out of doors as at the table, and in the salons of Signora X——. If her mother had a headache, I was invited to escort her up and down the Corso, as her mother's deputy. "I can trust you," the mother said to me very early in our acquaintance. "You are not dangerous." And in good truth she and her dear daughter did trust me, to an extent I cannot but call astounding. I suppose I was a very simple youth in those days; for the mother's remark warmed my heart.

Up and down the Corso, therefore, we drove, or walked, according to her humour, from four to five o'clock in the afternoon. Our first day was uneventful. I enjoyed myself extremely. She was as amiable as girl could be. The second day I perceived that there was already a slight understanding between my companion and two or three stalwart officers of His Majesty's Guards, who chanced to be lounging, with cigars in their mouths, precisely where I had seen them the day before. But on the third of our promenades this ocular understanding had ripened—Heaven and womankind alone know how—into an acquaintanceship. Count W—— and the Marchese P—— had the effrontery to bow to her. She, on her part, offered her small hand first to the one and then to the other. She did not say much; but her smiles were fearfully expressive. And in the course of two minutes, amid the bouquet of compliments that were offered

to her, she yet contrived to observe that she was staying at the house of Signora X——, where she was greatly bored. If it were not for the Corso, she said, she would insist on leaving Rome.

"I implore you not to go," whispered the Marchese, taking the hand she thrust towards him as a farewell. "We have had no sun in Rome this winter until now."

"Merci," she laughed, in retort, as she took my arm and sailed away.

Now I ought to have been enlightened by her conduct on this one occasion. She said she had known these soldiers in Naples or Milan, I forget which. She introduced us as if she were really qualified to do so; but I knew in my heart that she lied. And, worse still, she felt that I knew it; and though she ought to have been steeled against such a contingency, she resented this in me as if I had actually told her she was a liar.

A week of this sort of life brought grey hairs upon my head. The pleasure of gazing upon her face was so extreme that it became a pain. I could tell off the record of her freckles better even than she herself; and she was an accomplished devotee of the glass. You may say that, if she was freckled, she could not have been very lovely. Ah, but there are freckles and freckles. Never have I seen any more enchanting addition to a fair face than the one particular freckle which was set under the lower lid of her left eye. It was the colour of her eyes, and could no more readily have been dispensed with than the added glory of the stars on a clear moon-light night.

"You have my best wishes, I'm sure," said her mother to me at length when I could bear it no longer. It was not necessary to make a long tale of it to her. She had seen it for a whole fortnight. For the matter of that, so had all the world that had the chance. Men, and especially young men, have no self-control when they are in love. Nor can they dissimulate, like their sisters. If the extension of general culture in the arts and sciences have no other effect upon women than to relieve them of that annoying gift of dissimulation which has hitherto been one of their strong towers of defence against the wiles of mankind, it will, I think, be justified upon this one count. It is iniquity in a woman to coquet. It is but fair to men that when a woman loves a man she should be unable to conceal her love.

But to continue. There was a pleasant balcony opening from the large windows in Signora X——'s dining-room; thick red curtains hung between the room and the outer stone—they were so thick that they completely deadened the noise of carriages in the street. I invited her to join me in a cigarette on the balcony after dinner. She had often before sinned in this respect; but it had been always at her own suggestion. That I should take the initiative seemed to surprise her. She looked at me in a quick, delightful way; and I knew that I need not tell forth my heart's story. Then she took my arm, and we pushed the curtains aside. I was as jubilant as the saints in heaven.

When she was seated she trifled with her fan, and glanced up at me with curious brightness in her eyes. I declare I could hardly help putting my arms round her neck there and then; but that would have been a prodigious scandal with Signora X——; for the pension was in an important street, and an electric lamp seemed placed to throw all its light upon our balcony, as if we were so much stage-scenery and the passers-by in the street were the spectators. I am now heartily thankful that I did not embrace her. She was playing with me, and enjoying to the full the brief consciousness that a man was by her who, at a word from her, would have jumped into the street at the risk of his life, and who worshipped her as none but mad lovers worship ought. I believe I observed to her that it was a beautiful evening, and that I had never seen her look better. My passion was not of the coherent kind.

I had not yet framed the words of my declaration when we heard the music of a regimental band. She bounded to her feet, saying something about "those dear soldiers," which it did not please me to hear. She was so near to me that she seemed to lean against me. All the world was odorous of attar of roses, her pet perfume. I felt that it was now or never.

"Cara mia," I began; but she stopped me abruptly.

"No, no, no," she said, "I may be all that and more in a letter, Mr. Y——, but in real life you mustn't expect it. And now do be quiet. I'm very keen on the tune they're playing this very minute."

This was decisive enough for most men, perhaps; but it did not quench my hopes, strange to say. I proceeded to explain that I was very serious, and that I would be her

slave as long as she lived if she would but marry me. It was a foolish note to strike; but it was natural. When we are young, folly is very natural to us.

Meanwhile, the military were marching below us. They were very attractive, no doubt; but I did not see them until the last files came by. She had not allowed my passion to distract her from her diversion. Latterly, however, I marked such a change in her face that I, too, looked over the balcony. Then I understood it all. The Marchese was approaching with his drawn sword in his hand. His eyes were in our direction. What an idiot I was, to be sure!

But my infatuation did not last much longer. When the Marchese was nearly parallel with us, my companion dropped her handkerchief. Italian discipline was not proof against this. The Marchese picked it up, touched it with his lips, and paused to give it to the "portiere" of our house. Then, with a very fine salute, he marched away.

"Do go down, there's a good fellow, and fetch it for me," she said, when she could see him no longer.

I think I was far from cured even while I was descending the stairs; but I was quite cured ere I began to reascend them. The handkerchief was given to me by the "portiere"—the villain grinned like a clown—folded neatly round a letter. Was she abashed when she received it from me? Not in the least. She thanked me very sweetly, and opened the letter with much eagerness. I, on my part, begged her to excuse me, and went off to my room. My reflections for fifteen minutes, or more, were most humiliating. I have never since suffered such a blow to my self-importance.

Other bad quarters of an hour seem tolerable, in retrospect, compared to this. And yet they, also, were very unpleasant at the time. One was consequent upon the winning of the Derby by a horse in which I was not at all interested. Another was that preparatory to a first birching. A third depended upon a speech that had to be made, or, rather, attempted.

I was within hailing distance of the mature age of fifteen when I first caught that fever of "sport" which holds some of us fast through a lifetime. It was very lamentable indeed. All the simple, honest pleasures of existence—such as stamp-collecting, cricket, the consumption of toffee, and the caricaturing of the head-master—

became in a moment insipid. The tempter was a worthy resident in a remote town, who contrived to send a circular, undetected, to half-a-dozen boys in the school, whereon he had set forth his claims to be regarded by them as a benefactor. In lucid English he stated that he could guarantee a return of ten-fold upon any investments—he avoided the grave word “bets”—with which we entrusted him. A long list of clients of repute placed his honesty beyond suspicion.

Two of us fell victims to the snare. What a solemn, yet inflammatory debate we held together in the B class-room, while the rest of the school was at play! We felt that we were monstrously wicked, notwithstanding the virtuous assertions of the circular. But there was no resisting the seductive opportunity to turn a five-pound note into fifty golden sovereigns. My friend William collected one five-pound note from divers boys who were in his debt. And I, on my part, wrote a pathetic letter to my four uncles, begging each of them to send me a sovereign, which I wanted “very badly”: a successful ruse. Thus William and I were able to send the “sport” agents two five-pound notes in a registered letter; and with the money we sent full instructions how the hundred pounds we calculated would proceed from the ten should be transmitted to us.

We were very conceited during the fortnight that had to elapse before the Derby was run. How could it have been otherwise! Was not an El Dorado before us, by the possession of which we were as much above our comrades as a king is above his subjects! Heavens! what turbulent dreams of greatness came to me night after night! There was not a desire, of the many I had, which I did not satisfy fully with the fifty pounds that was already as good as mine. Jones, Brown, Robinson, and Smith—my four bosom friends—were promised equal satisfaction in sundry important wishes of their hearts. It was a mad time. I went down and down in my class until I was nearer the bottom than I had ever yet been. Suffering was meted out to me for this decadence of effort. It was well merited; but I took it all as an elephant might endure the hopping of a flea upon its back. The future would atone for all things.

The Derby was duly run; the favourite, in whose success we were interested, duly failed us; and we, William and I, duly fell headlong into as dolorous a pit of

despair as ever yawned at the feet of back-sliding youth. It was very, very hard to bear. But it was, on the whole, a “righteous affliction.” For, since the age of fifteen, I have had a horror of the speculative ways of “sport,” that has doubtless saved me from the loss of other five-pound notes. And never do I go on to a race-course and hear the babel of voices—“two to one on the field”—without recalling the tearful meeting which William and I had in secret in the same B class-room which, a fortnight before, had gaily echoed the bright hopes we had so freely confided to it.

Now the pains and anxieties which attach to a first birching are in their nature somewhat similar to those William and I suffered over our “investments.” They are sharper, to be sure; and certainly also less continuous. In so far, therefore, they are inferior.

Understand that the anxiety pertains only to the earliest experience of the kind.

“Plantagenet secundus, you will be good enough to wait in the schoolroom at half-past twelve!”

This was the admonition.

“It means that you are in for it,” whispers an older or better informed comrade; and thenceforward, until half-past twelve, you are as miserable a little mortal as the earth supports.

How bitter the soliloquy the schoolboy in such a case indulges in! He sees his past as clearly as, it is said, the drowning man sees his. Life comes in review before him with all its joys and glamour of promise. And this is the end—to be birched at half-past twelve!

If they knew at home what was impending over him, their darling, surely it would break their hearts. His little sisters would deluge the schoolroom with their tears, and wail horribly. Would his mother not die outright! And his father—the shame would have an awful effect upon him.

By the time these never-to-be-forgotten self-communings have reached a climax it is twenty-nine minutes past twelve. That he may not be made to lose time over Plantagenet secundus, the head-master bids them sound the bell a minute earlier than usual; and then the tragedy is wrought, and Plantagenet secundus is a transformed boy. He is like one who has lived through a famous battle. His head is raised by his experience. He is no

longer a novice in life. He has a topic of conversation which is as exclusively for the initiated as that of Masonry. The blood of his forefathers has been called into activity by the trivial scourging, and he feels that he is braver than he was before.

As for the dear ones at home, and their thoughts about him and his birching, it is curious to mark how little Plantagenet secundus troubles himself now about one or the other. Now that he is a boy of the world—the birching having promoted him—he addresses his mother and sisters as “dear,” instead of “dearest.” Further, the tone in his letters has changed in so remarkable a manner that an explanation is asked of him. But this he declines to give; or perhaps he evades the matter in a lordly way that grieves his mother, and procures afresh for him the suspended admiration of his little sisters.

Needless to add, that a second birching—which soon follows the first—is nothing at all to Plantagenet secundus, in comparison with its predecessor.

Of a different nature is the anguish called forth, in the modest man, by the responsibility of his first speech. But it is yet so keen, that it is probable he would suffer the shame and pain of a birching twice over, if he might, by such endurance, be spared the trial of the speech.

There are sundry ways of making a speech. The confident person—wont, as an infant, to address his nurse from the high chair, and astound her by his eloquence and impudence—trusts wholly to the moment to inspire him. The man whose temperament is now sanguine, and now despondent, if he be wise, will frame his speech while he is hopeful. It will then interest his auditors, be his mood when he speaks what it may. But the modest man, who may be said to be the last in rough category of speech-makers, is never sure of salvation.

What profits it the modest man that he have his subject off by heart? He cannot so easily forget himself as acquire this acquaintance with his subject. When he stands up, and realises that all the score, or hundreds, or thousands of faces which he sees below him are interested for the moment in him, and him only, he is conscious, before all things, that he is a very defective person, and by no means worthy of their attention; and straightway he forgets what he had come prepared to say. Vain is it then to stammer a few con-

ventional words of preamble; to look at his notes, the ceiling, the glass of water by his trousers, and his notes again. He would give the world to get behind a curtain—to hide from the smiling faces of the audience, and the stern visage of the chairman he is disappointing. There are not five grains of coherence about him. He perspires with pain of mind, assumes an expression of appeal which touches the hearts of those who understand it:

“Mr. Chairman, gentlemen—ladies and gentlemen, that is—I have come here to-night—that is, I have been asked to come—on an important—a very important subject. I say, Mr. Chairman, an important, because—a very important subject—But I think I had better sit down again.”

It is little on paper; but it is much to him. I doubt if any sorrow of the kind can compete in its intensity with that co-incident with the regret a man feels after an effort to speak in public. How he has humbled himself! And how pleased the world is when a man shows that he has conceit which will bear such humiliation! And how doubly afflicting to the modest man, with a reputation for modesty, to be compelled to admit that his modesty is, to a large extent, merely conceit in a mask; and to perceive that he of all men is fated to suffer most when he appears before a public that knows him better than he knows himself!

Our bad quarters of an hour are, after all, very excellent kinds of discipline. They are so many exercises in control of the passions, or in sympathy, that chief leaven of society. The more of them we have, and the sooner in life we have them, the better for us. It is a commonplace of knowledge that few things are more beneficial for a man at his start in life than a crushing misfortune, or a bitter bereavement. Our bad quarters of an hour may be regarded as misfortune and bereavement, writ small that we may bear them the more easily.

FASHION IN FICTION.

If it be true that “the fashion of this world changeth,” it is equally true that the fashion of this world’s fiction changeth in quite as remarkable a manner. It is the novels and plays of a period rather than the most exhaustive of histories, that give us the truest pictures of the variations of fashion, not only in matters of social life,

but also in the literary style of each succeeding generation of popular writers. Take, for example, the light literature published during the early and middle part of this century, and compare its main characteristics with those of the great mass of fiction which is brought under our notice nowadays, and it will be astonishing to note the change that has taken place in almost every detail of importance.

One of the most striking points of contrast between the novels read by our grandfathers and those of our own time, is the very limited number of distinct types, or classes into which the former can be divided compared with the latter. Down to the middle of this century, if not later, there were but four chief types of fiction, namely: the historical, the sensational, the domestic, and the fashionable novel. Within comparatively recent years, however, these types have increased and multiplied in a most extraordinary manner. We have now, in addition to those already specified, the realistic, the socialistic, the naturalistic, the artistic, the spiritualistic, the scientific, the political, and the psychological novel; besides many more which it is needless here to mention.

The spread of education, and the growing interest of the public in a great variety of topics, of which formerly they scarcely knew the names, accounts, no doubt, in a measure for this remarkable increase in the types of fiction. I am afraid it must be allowed, however, that now we have quantity at the expense of quality. In former days, authors were, for the most part, persons who had, at least, some of the most necessary qualifications for their profession. Those who produced trash had very little chance of having their works read, since circulating libraries were few and far between, and no one cared to buy a book which would not stand half-a-dozen readings at least.

Nowadays every one writes, and those who have the most elementary ideas of grammar and construction write the most. The libraries have to supply every class of reader, and, having by sad experience proved the truth of Carlyle's dictum, that, "men are mostly fools," the librarian lays in a larger stock of rubbish than of sound fiction.

Oddly enough, much as has been said and written against the three-volume system—for which the circulating libraries are supposed to be responsible—the very weakest and dreariest work that has ever

been given to the world is to be found in the shilling novelette.

A Frenchman can generally write a good story within small dimensions; but the very genius of our language is against the Englishman who attempts the feat.

It should also be remembered that the works of Miss Austen, George Eliot, Dickens, and Thackeray, are, in nearly every case, far more bulky than our modern three volumes with their broad margins and large type. There is no doubt that a novel writer, if he is to produce a good book, needs plenty of scope in which to draw his characters and work out his plot. The older novelists knew this, and though, like Richardson and Miss Burney, they might sometimes be long-winded, their productions have stood the test of a hundred years; while, at the present time, a hundred days is a respectable age for the popularity of a work of fiction to attain.

Although there is no doubt that the modern novelist has improved upon his old-fashioned predecessor in certain particulars, it is equally undeniable that he might derive much advantage from a careful study of what may be termed "early nineteenth century style."

We are suffering just now from a plague of adjectives in our fiction. Everything is elaborately described, and nothing can be mentioned without being preceded by two, if not three, adjectives. For example, in the average modern novel, the heroine is never allowed to have a hand, simply; that member is always alluded to as "her cool, alim, white hand!" Now, in the good old days, a novelist never insulted his reader's power of imagination by thinking it necessary to explain that his heroine's hand was not hot, red, or podgy. And it was the same with the other personal details. When once he had told us that the lady's hair was raven, and her eyes azure, we were expected to remember these facts, which were not repeated with wearisome persistency throughout the book.

Of course, matters were simplified for the old-fashioned novelists by the unvarying rule that the hero and heroine must be models of beauty and of all the virtues. Nowadays, it is not necessary that they should be either pretty or good. The chief characteristic of the modern hero and heroine seems to be a fatal tendency towards analysis. These young people have an irritating habit of continually examining themselves in a sort of mental

looking-glass. They can never leave themselves alone, or be content to be natural. Every thought, every emotion is scientifically dissected, while the slightest, most unimportant action is imbued with some occult meaning. This type of character has been introduced from America, and the sooner it returns thither the better.

It must, however, in justice be admitted that in the vast mass of fiction which is turned out year by year, a certain proportion of heroines may be found, who are both charming and unaffected; far more so, indeed, than their old-fashioned predecessors, who were always either weeping or swooning. They never cried or fainted. Miss Austen's heroines are almost the only girls in the fiction of her era whom one would have cared to know, and they are apt to be a little long-winded, and express themselves in too admirably rounded sentences. Now the modern hero and heroine, when seen at their best, are by no means perfect. They flirt, talk slang, and occasionally tell fibs; but, on the other hand, they seldom cry, never use transcendental language, and are blest with that best of all gifts, a sense of humour.

But it is impossible to enter at greater length into the interesting, but practically inexhaustible, subject of "character study" in ancient and modern fiction. It is necessary now to turn to some of the lighter details which illustrate, amusingly enough, the points of contrast between the two schools. Perhaps the most striking of these are connected with the important questions of art, scenery, food, and dress.

It is curious what a small place the arts played in the fiction of a former day. This is, no doubt, partly to be accounted for by the fact that there were then so few amateur authors who dabbled in other subjects besides literature, and partly by the benighted state of ignorance on all æsthetic matters in which the great majority of the English people lived very comfortably during the early and middle years of this century.

When a novelist dealt with music, he usually confined himself to the vaguest terms; but if he attempted to enter into particulars, he very soon floundered out of his depth. His heroes seldom sang or played, for that would have been considered effeminate. His heroines preferred to sing sentimental ballads of their own composition. One lady, we remember, was blessed with a "superb highly-trained falsetto voice," while a gentleman, who

would have matched her well if he had not happened to live in a different book, when asked to play, sat down to the piano, and without removing his gloves, "struck a few wild chords!" Nowadays, the characters discourse learnedly of Brahms, Wagner, and Liszt, while many of them, in spite of having had little or no training, sing and play like professional artistes.

Perhaps we have had too much scenery in our novels of late years. Descriptions of places that exist only in the mind of the author, are very apt to pall upon the reader. Still, it must be admitted that the quality as well as the quantity of the word-painting art has much improved. Formerly, the landscapes of fiction were as conventional as those in a schoolgirl's drawing-book. Each object in nature had its own descriptive term: the azure sky; the emerald grass, bejewelled with blossoms; the silver streams; the verdant foliage; the placid meads; the lowing kine, and so on.

With regard to food, it was, of course, not the fashion for the old-fashioned heroine to eat anything. A glass of cold water, or a cup of tea, was all the ethereal creature required. The hero might indulge in rounds of roast beef, and even tankards of ale, without losing his character. But either would have been horrified at the incessant and unwholesome meals consumed by their descendants.

To read Miss Braddon's accounts of the five o'clock teas devoured by her heroines, or the particulars given with so much gusto by Mr. Phillips, of the incessant "snacks" and "nips" in which his characters, male and female, indulge, is quite enough to give an imaginative person a fit of dyspepsia.

To come, lastly, to the important question of clothes, I do not mean to point out the obvious fact that the fashions in dress have changed, but merely to draw attention to the remarkable manner in which the conventional dress of fiction has altered in character. Forty or fifty years ago, the heroine had but one or two costumes. If poor, she always wore a plain, but neat gown, with spotless linen collars and cuffs. This sombre garb was relieved, if she was of a coquettish disposition, by a "knot of cherry-coloured ribbon at her throat." The rich heroine almost invariably wore a sky-blue silk, trimmed with a profusion of white lace, and a pink rosebud in her golden hair. This costume was considered to be the very acme of elegance and good

taste. Now, however, we have changed all that. The feminine novelist dresses her heroines in the most elaborate fashions—rather a dangerous habit, by the way, considering that these cannot possibly be correct for more than a few months at a time. Some few of the less conventional lady-writers clothe the creatures of their imagination in artistic attire. Ouida's heroines, for example, wear—day and night, summer and winter—white velvet gowns, with antique silver belts. The male novelist still confines himself chiefly to generalities in regard to this matter, and shows his wisdom in so doing.

Of course it would be possible to go on piling up points of contrast ad infinitum. In the foregoing pages we have merely indicated some few of the most obvious of these. The "old order changeth," and whether for the better or worse, is a matter of opinion. The conclusion to which one is, perhaps, most naturally drawn, is that in character study, descriptive faculty, and unaffected simplicity of diction, the moderns have the advantage; but that for careful working out of plot, power of straightforward narration, and undeviating attention to the "story," the palm must be awarded to the ancients.

WITH COMPOUND INTEREST.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

By LUCIE WALKER.

CHAPTER II.

"AND is all the South like this? So scorched, so bare, so glaring? I had pictured it so different; I hope I am not going to be disappointed."

This was Ursula's first comment on her new surroundings, as the carriage in which her father had come to meet her left Toulon by the road which leads along the coast, to the village of Carqueyranne. As she spoke she looked to the right and left, and saw between the gaily-painted suburban villas on the one hand, glimpses of a smooth steel-blue sea and of distant rocky islands, whose outline stood out sharp and clear in the transparent distance; on the other side, the road was skirted by masses of reddish-yellow rock, up the inequalities of which a few quaint, clumsy cactus plants climbed. The dull grey of the olives and aloes; the sombre, inert masses of the eucalyptus; and the abrupt, stiff forms of the cypresses,

with which the houses were surrounded, contrasted with, but did not soften, the midday glare. The first faint pink roses were scarcely visible against the background of their scant, dusty foliage.

"And are those olive-trees?" she continued. "What scrubby, gnarled things they are!"

"Yet Cherbuliez," replied Mr. Armitage, cheerfully, "says that the first sight of an olive is an epoch in a life. You see, my dear, your tastes are insular, and require cultivation."

"Now, father," returned Ursula, "that is too bad. You know I always pride myself on being superior to those prejudices which are usually called insular."

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, my dear, I had, for the moment, forgotten what an ardent little cosmopolitan you are; for the last few weeks, you know, I have been considering you purely from what one may call an insular point of view."

"I wonder why," asked Ursula.

"Because, my dear child, you would not be here if you were not English. It is the Englishwoman in you, and not the cosmopolitan, which Madame di Loscagno wants."

"You don't mean to say," rejoined Ursula, contemptuously, "that she is one of those terrible creatures—an Anglo-maniac?"

"Not in the least; though she is devoted to everything English. Her devotion is, however, no mere fad; but is rooted deeply in the experiences of her past life, or rather, I might say, is the sequel to the romance of her youth."

"Dear me," cried Ursula, "this sounds interesting; and do you know this romance?"

"I know it as mere hearsay, not from the Baroness herself, who is, despite a certain superficial frankness, an extremely reserved woman. She was not, you must know, born a member of the select circle which now receives her with open arms; her father was a Parisian stockbroker, who made an immense fortune in American railways. His only daughter and heiress, now Madame di Loscagno, had the bad taste to fall in love without asking her father's advice, and to marry without obtaining his consent—no easy matter in France, as you know. The object of her affections was a compatriot of ours—a man of good family, but of no property. The stockbroker was not a person to be trifled with; he forbade his disobedient daughter

to even ask his forgiveness, and left her to the tender mercies of the wolves who, doubtless, soon clamoured round her door. I believe the ménage turned out, as such ménages often do, a failure; no doubt, our needy compatriot's temper was considerably tried by finding that his aristocratic name was not worth a sou of dowry. A little boy was born; but matters did not improve. At last, the episode came to a very tragic end—at some little town on the coast of Brittany. The husband went out boating, one day, with their little boy, who was then about three or four; the following day the boat drifted, empty, on to the sands. Then, like a true woman, the Baroness—she was not the Baroness then, you know—buried the memory of all her unhappiness, and forgave everything that she had to forgive. Her terrible sorrow melted her father's wrath, and she returned to the parental roof—that is, to the Villa Estella, which the stockbroker had been busy building while his daughter had been testing the fallacy of love in a cottage. Years after, she married, at her father's persuasion, the Baron di Loscagno, an Italian nobleman twice her age, who bartered his title for her money-bags. She is now a widow, for the second time, and I suppose, as she feels old age creeping on, she tries to renew the memory of her youth by drawing round her associations from auld lang syne—English voices and English faces."

"Really," cried Ursula, "that is quite an interesting story! Do you know the first husband's name?"

"He has been dead these five-and-twenty years," answered Mr. Armitage, "and his name, which was, no doubt, difficult to French lips, has passed from the memory of tradition."

While Ursula had been listening to this story, the prospect had gradually been increasing in variety; on the left, the lofty conical Paradis, and the curves of the Condon, formed a foreground and distance between which the lower hills and romantic gorges offered every attraction to the exploring visitor; to the right stretched out the broad, peaceful sea, while in front the low, pine-covered hills were partially obscured by the broad back of the coachman.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Mr. Armitage. "Now I shall be greatly surprised if you are disappointed in the Villa Estella."

They were entering a pair of lofty gates as he spoke, and the horses were slackening

speed to ascend a drive which wound upwards beneath the shade of eucalyptus and palm, between which Ursula caught glimpses of bright flowers and of splashing fountains. The dust and glare of the road was left behind, the wind came softly under the trees, bringing a breath of violets; finally, the carriage stopped on a broad gravel sweep in front of a handsome low-roofed house, round whose many balconies and verandas every description of flowering creeper hung. At the open door, framed in a circle of dazzling bougain-villia, stood an old lady of diminutive stature, with eager face and outstretched hands to welcome the new-comer. She did not listen to the elaborate speech with which Mr. Armitage presented his daughter to her; but, taking Ursula by the hands, she drew her down, looked at her for a moment, then, as if satisfied by her scrutiny of the sweet girlish face, she raised herself on tiptoe, and expressed her approbation by a kiss on either cheek.

"And now, Mr. Armitage," she said, "you have fulfilled your commission and brought me your daughter; you have, doubtless, satisfied your craving for home news on the way—I give you your congé. My nephew is somewhere. Not busy—oh, dear no—is René ever busy? While you look for him, and join in his employment of doing nothing, I and your daughter will try and make friends with one another." Then, turning to Ursula, the voluble little lady continued: "He has told you, perhaps, that he only waited here for your arrival; to-morrow afternoon he leaves us. He is in a fever to be back in England, so that he may begin building a fortune out of an old stone quarry which has not been worked since the days of the Moors. It is his forte—or, should I say his foible?—to make fortunes."

"He is very clever in money matters," said Ursula, with an air of profound conviction.

"I thought so," rejoined the Baroness, with a merry twinkle in her eyes. "And is he generally successful in his fortune-making?"

"He has been rather unfortunate," said Ursula, as she followed her companion into the house; "but I hope, for your sake, as well as his, that he will have better luck this time."

The old lady's smile developed into a laugh.

"Not for my sake!" she said. "I am too cautious—too old, if you like—to join

in speculations. I am nearly fifty-six. At that age one has learnt the wisdom of contentment. My nephew, however, will be grateful for your good wishes. He is going into the scheme 'neck and crop,' as you English say. It will do him no harm to have a little anxiety, a little risk—he is so lazy. Do you like lazy people? However, that is not now a question of importance—we will compare notes on these matters later on. Now let me show you your room, and when you are ready to come down, you will find afternoon tea—real English afternoon tea—in the drawing-room, which you shall pour out for us. An Englishwoman looks so thoroughly at home with a teapot in one hand and the sugar-tongs in the other."

Amid this accompaniment of chatter, Madame di Loscagno had led Ursula into a cool, lofty room, opening out on to one of the flowery balconies, and looking down over a trellis-covered terrace, where the Banksia roses already made a pleasant shade.

"How delicious!" was Ursula's almost unspoken reflection, as soon as she found herself alone. "I wonder what mother would say, if she could see what she wanted me to refuse, or whether Felix would continue his forebodings of evil!" Then, with a deep-drawn sigh as she looked round, she continued: "I wonder if Felix is very unhappy? I'm sorry if he is; but I cannot help it, and I will not keep on thinking of him and of all the old story any longer. He does not love me as I hope I shall be loved some day; and I don't love him one little bit. I think I shall sit down at once and write to mother—I must describe the lovely view from this delicious balcony to some one who does not know it, and I must tell her how the dear old thing kissed me. It would have been so different if she had been stiff and formal. Felix is always saying that one's view of a thing depends entirely on one's own standpoint; and here am I, caught up by the wind of a kind destiny and dropped on a spot from which you begin by seeing the most agreeable side of everything. Yes, I shall certainly write to them at once."

As she stood thus on the balcony, taking a bird's-eye view of as much of her new surroundings, moral and physical, as she could command, her reverie was broken in upon by the sudden commencement of a song on the terrace below. The voice of the singer was such a voice as could not

fail to arrest the attention of a cultivated ear. It was a pure, rich baritone, whose easy inflections spoke at once of Southern grace and Southern carelessness.

The song was even more striking than the voice; the words were in a language totally strange to Ursula; but, joined to one of those quaint and powerful melodies which the Provençal peasants still keep as a legacy of the troubadours, without verbal translation it gained such depth and beauty of meaning, that it came to her with all the charm of an unexpected revelation of happiness and enjoyment. The sunshine, the crisp, transparent distance, the shimmer of the sea, the many hues of the flowers, all seemed blent in the joyful, sparkling phrases. Ursula could not see the singer; she wondered if it were a wandering minstrel, or if one of the gardeners lightened his labours by such an exquisite performance. Whoever he was, he stirred the inmost fibres of her heart, and kindled her quick imagination. She was sure the song was of love, of soft vows, and happy meetings, of an ideal bliss in this land of summer. Then the strain changed, a cloud passed over the sun, the distance grew grey; the flowers languished; the lady smiled no more on her faithful troubadour, and the melody died away in a long sigh. Ursula gave a little shiver; she would have had the lady relent, and the joyous music resound once more from the lips of the lover. In the stillness which followed the song, she began herself to try and recall the former part of the melody; but its mazes and modulations were too intricate to be easily retraced, and when, for the second time, she attempted the opening bars, the unseen minstrel joined his voice to hers and repeated the strange, uncomprehended words; she smiled as she followed him.

"This is a kind of singing-lesson which I certainly did not expect," she thought, "and I must try and see what my teacher is like."

Then she started with surprise, for at the sound of her father's voice below, the song came to an abrupt end.

"Ah, there you are, Baron!" he cried; "I caught the sound of your favourite ditty and tracked you out."

So it had been no less interesting a person than Monsieur le Baron di Loscagno who sang so imitably! But when he and Mr. Armitage had strolled away from the terrace, and when Ursula sat down to write her letter, she did not mention him

or the impression his baritone voice had made on her; though she spent some ten minutes in drawing on the edge of her blotting-book imaginary profiles which should fulfil the promise of that voice.

Meanwhile, the troubadour had descended to a very practical level.

"Now, my dear Armitage," he began, as they walked along in the shady garden, "let me see if I understand all your programme. You take our valuable specimens of green marble to England; you have certain knowing people on your list to whom you will show them; these knowing ones will lend their valuable, but to me somewhat incomprehensible, aid in starting the thing; you sell the shares and collect the capital. How long will all that take?"

"Not very long," replied Mr. Armitage, cheerfully, "that is, if everything goes well; but——"

"But it will go well. Why should it not go well?"

"There is no reason at all; but we must not be too sanguine."

"Nay," cried the Baron, "I must be sanguine. I do assure you, Armitage, that if I had not this scheme to cling to, as a last straw, I should collapse utterly. To doubt concerning our success would be to resort to the most extreme measures. Do you not understand that I am squeezed as dry as this old fir-cone? I couldn't possibly, to save my honour, pay one per cent. of my debts. If the marble quarry should fail, I shall either blow out my brains, or go a-wooing to the daughter of some shopkeeper in Marseilles."

"I hope, my dear di Loscagno," said Mr. Armitage, "that you will not try such severe remedies. I should recommend, as an alternative, that you draw up and present to the Baroness a full, true, and particular statement of your deficit. Your debts would be but a trifle to her large balance at her banker's."

Monsieur di Loscagno shrugged his shoulders.

"You do not know my aunt," he said. "She is fonder of that same balance than she is of me; as well she may be, for, whereas I have only been her nephew for a few years, her fortune is a matter of ancient history. The sum total of what you call my deficit would require a handsome row of figures to express it with veracity. I am no longer in the heyday of youth, nor have I ever been in that position of petted child, which palliates,

if it does not quite justify, a little exuberance in expenditure. I think the result of an appeal such as you suggest, would be that my aunt would cut me off with ten sous. No, my dear Armitage, I prefer to pin my faith on you, and hew my fortune out of the quarry, or to put my neck into a certain matrimonial noose, which was once dangled before my unwilling eyes. Ay di me! these worries are enough to kill a man."

"I doubt it," replied Mr. Armitage, "and I speak as a connoisseur in such matters. During the last ten years, I have survived several pecuniary crises, and I have not the sweet assurance which ought to buoy you up—that some day I shall be a millionaire."

"A remote contingency, my good friend, and one which involves its own share of present disagreeables. All the millions of a Rothschild could hardly compensate for the ennui of these long duty-visits in this dull spot. I wonder why the late respected father of Madame did not build his villa at Nice."

"Nice," remarked Mr. Armitage, "is, as you well know, a costly and seductive place; be thankful that you can vegetate and economise in a retirement so pleasant as this."

"Armitage, you are in a didactic mood; it doesn't suit you, and it bores me. I am going into the house, to be introduced to your daughter and to drink her welcome in a cup of tea."

In the meantime, Ursula, after a hasty letter home, had rejoined the Baroness.

"If I have kept the teapot waiting, Madame," she said, "you must pardon me, I have been writing to my mother. One's first impressions pass away so quickly, and later ones are always more difficult to describe."

The Baroness patted her hand.

"I hope," she said, "that your first record is a pleasant one."

"It is perfectly delicious," replied Ursula, sitting down beside the old lady; "I have told mother that I have arrived in fairyland."

Madame di Loscagno smiled. "If all your first impressions are as enthusiastic, no wonder they are not durable. I fear the day will come when your mother will receive another picture, considerably toned down."

"They will tone this one down for themselves," said Ursula, with a pretty little pout. "Mother did not want me

to leave home, and Felix was perfectly odious about it."

"And who is Felix? and what right has he to make himself odious about your coming to me?"

"He has no right at all, I assure you," replied the girl, emphatically; "he considers himself privileged because he has lived with us since before I was born; he has been a kind of brother to me. I have no other brother."

"Brothers of that kind sometimes claim more than brotherly privileges."

"Oh," said Ursula, trying to speak unconcernedly, "the reason Felix was vexed at my coming here was that he wanted me to study music and make a profession of it. He is a musician, you know; he is very clever; but he is so critical and hard to please that he frightened me."

"Felix!" said the Baroness. "You do not know how many associations the name spoken by English lips calls up for me."

"Have you, then, some great friend named Felix?" asked Ursula.

A strange, pathetic shadow fell on the old lady's face. "I once knew a dear little baby named Felix," she said.

"A baby!" repeated Ursula. "He must have been an extraordinary baby for you to look so grave about him. Ah, forgive me," she went on quickly, "I ought to have guessed he was your own child, and you lost him."

"Yes," said Madame di Loscagno, "and I am a silly old woman to have spoken of him again. It is long since I did so, because the older I grow the more I seem to want him." Then she bent down and gave Ursula a kiss. "It is a good omen for us both that you have brought me to speak of my little lost boy."

"It is very odd," said Ursula, "that it should have been Felix's name which was the beginning of the good omen. I should have expected it—considering all things—to have had a contrary effect."

Just then Mr. Armitage entered, followed by the Baron.

"Ah!" said the Baroness, "here is my nephew. Now we must leave off being sentimental and become commonplace."

"Madame!" said Monsieur di Loscagno, "I call that a most depreciating manner of presenting me to Mademoiselle. Fortunately, we have already commenced our acquaintance in a manner decidedly not commonplace."

Madame di Loscagno looked interrogatively from one to the other.

"I heard Monsieur singing on the terrace," explained Ursula. "I had no idea who it was, but it was such a beautiful song that I tried to sing it myself when he had finished. Ah, Monsieur," she added, impulsively, "what a beautiful voice you have! It seemed as if one of the old troubadours was singing."

"I felt rather like a troubadour," replied the Baron, "when you answered me from your window."

His eyes met hers for a moment. They were just such eyes as Ursula had pictured to herself while he was singing—large, dark, and full of a soft power whose spell seized upon her at once. Whether she loved him that moment, or whether her love came afterwards, she never knew; but of this she was certain at once—that she should love him with all the love she could give.

"You are incorrigible, René," said the Baroness, tapping her nephew on the arm with her fan. "And you, my dear, if you encourage him to pose as a troubadour, will soon find his rendering of the character a little ennuyeux."

"Mademoiselle," said Monsieur di Loscagno, with mock gravity, "must form her own opinion. I trust you will not bias her mind; her appreciation of our national melodies does great honour to her taste. I hope," he continued, turning to Ursula, "that you will allow me to teach you the rest of the lay which you have already begun to learn."

"I see," said the Baroness, "that Monsieur Felix need not fear for his pupil's musical education. It will not be neglected just at present. And now, my dear Mademoiselle, will you come with me for a walk up the hill, before the sun sets?"

"Armitage," said the Baron, as the ladies left the room, "your daughter is perfectly charming; now, while my aunt tries to convince her of my incompetency as a singing-master, will you allow me to ask you if, in case I should venture to tell her, in the course of her lessons, how charming I find her, I should be infringing the privileges of this Monsieur Felix, whose name, I could not help seeing, brought a most becoming blush to her cheek?"

"Certainly not, my dear fellow; but take care that you do not share the fate of Monsieur Felix, who, poor lad, has scorched his wings in the candle."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER VII. THE FESTIVAL OF HOPE.

APRIL THE THIRTIETH, 1879.—"I wish dear Glennie were at home," says Aunt Dacie, "he would say that all this was 'quite perzackly.'"

Aunt Dacie is at once cheerful and tearful, like an April day. She has fast hold of Mazie's hand, and keeps kissing it every now and then, smiling and nodding at me the while; then wiping her eyes and shaking her head just a little, as who should say: "You can understand these mingled feelings of mine, good friend." As indeed, I do. But how we have ever brought her to such a frame of mind; how things have ever come to such a pass at all; how we are all gathered round the bright bit of fire that the still chilly evening renders so pleasant; how it can be that she sits there so gently, happily agitated, knowing everything; how it is that I, Louis Draycott, love Mazie, and that Mazie—oh, precious, blessed truth!—loves me; how all these things are so, is a wonder past all marvelling.

Mine must have been a double wooing. I must have laid siege to Aunt Dacie's heart and Mazie's both at once. At least, this is what Dumphie says. Dumphie, ever so little graver than his wont, but quite a happy spirit among the rest of us, following Mazie with a wistful gaze as one looks at a thing that one is about to part with presently; but full of little tender jestings and those "quips and cranks" that are germane to such occasions as the present.

For this is the day of our betrothal;

this is the day through which, as through a golden gate, I enter upon a new life—my darling's helpful hand for ever clasped in mine.

"I suppose," says Aunt Dacie, blinking the ready tears away, and speaking with a sad tremble in her voice, "that feeling like this, all upset, you know—glad and sorry all in a breath, as you may say—makes one's thoughts go back to the old days, and Glennie's little droll ways and sayings—the dear child! If he were here, Louis, he would hark back to them, too, and tell you that the 'greatest worseness' of it all is—Mazie's having to leave us."

Mazie is clinging about her in a moment.

"Not yet," she cries; "not yet. Not for ever such a long while yet!"

And the lovely eyes look back at me as she turns her gracious head, as though they fain would say: "Don't mind me speaking like that! I must comfort her. It isn't that I want you really to be a long time without me; it is not that I don't want to come; but—don't you see, dear love; don't you see?"

And I smile back at her, all comprehending.

I am convinced that Dumphie has had a long talk—a very long talk, with Aunt Dacie the night before, a difficult talk, too, I should imagine; but one in which he played his part well for Mazie's sake and mine. I am quite sure that he hid all sign of the trouble and amaze that had stirred his great loving heart at all that I had told him, quite convinced that he put himself entirely out of sight, that he thought only of what was for Mazie's happiness and mine, and at last succeeded in persuading Aunt Dacie that she had been quite deep and artful—the dear,

simple soul!—and seen how the wind was blowing all along; had, in fact, taken the affair under her wing—even helped it on ever so little.

I am sure that these things are so, for the dear lady has a cunning look—a would-be wise demeanour—that is at once quaint and delightful; a determination not to allow that she has been astonished, or the very least in the world taken unawares by anything. She did not seem a bit surprised to find, when she came home from a long walk this afternoon, that Mazie was not alone, that she was half smiles, half tears, and altogether content; and that the man by whose side she sat, and whose hand held hers close and fast, could find but few words to tell of the radiance of joy that made Prospect Place, with its one poplar-tree, seem to him the fairest Eden the world ever held or could hold. I hardly know now how I told my darling that I loved her. I know Kesia's gnarled old face, with keen dark eyes beneath white parted hair, looked somewhat curiously at me as she told me that "The mistress was out; but Miss Margaret was in, and I could 'step through' if I liked." And when I had "stepped through," and saw "Miss Margaret" standing there as she had risen to greet me, looking just a little shy, but not ill-pleased, I know not what I said. It seemed as if all in a moment I had dared to gather her to my heart, dared to touch the sweet trembling lips with mine, had said to her, almost in a whisper, though Kesia had gone down the kitchen-stairs long since:

"Do you love me, my darling—my darling?"

And she had answered gravely, with her great bright eyes raised to mine:

"Neither rhyme nor reason can express how much!"

All womanly, she gave with loving and generous hand the knowledge I craved for. She had "no cunning to be strange," but laid bare to me all her pure and gentle heart; told me how the love, that filled it now even to the brim, had grown and grown, day by day, and little by little; had seemed at first a treachery to those whose lives had centred round hers so long; but at length, seen more truly, had taken the guise of an added intensity, not an overshadowing of all the rest, since I, she was so sure, would love those dear ones only second to herself.

Terribly in earnest is this dear Margaret

of mine in every thought and feeling—one to suffer keenly if occasion should come; to love with passionate devotion, with utter selflessness; guileless as a child; deep-hearted as a woman; trustful, pure, and true. What have I done—poor wayfarer in life's journey—to have and to hold a prize so precious!

I confess to having felt some fear when Aunt Dacie appeared upon the scene of our wooing. I expected to be greeted like a robber intent upon stealing some cherished jewel; but Mazie made me see how true it is that "perfect love casteth out fear." She never stirred from the shelter of my arm—shy and proud, both at once, there she stood, trembling, yet resolute.

A moment the two women looked at each other; then they were clinging to one another, kissing, laughing, sobbing; and Aunt Dacie's neat little bonnet seemed likely to be crushed out of all shape. I found plenty to say to plead my cause; but it was before no stern judge. Dumphie had done his work well.

Before long, Aunt Dacie was seated on the sofa by the window, and we were all talking together as if Mazie and I had been betrothed for a year at least. But a sudden rush of feeling, I know not how or why, came across my darling.

She flung herself upon her knees before Aunt Dacie; her cheek took the "pale complexion of love;" her eyes shone bright through tears.

"It is so strange," she said, "so wonderful, that Louis should be all this to me; that I should be all this to him; that each should change the whole life of the other, and make it deeper, truer, and more beautiful. Oh, Aunt Dacie, how can I be thankful enough; how can I make myself worthy of it all? Tell me—tell me!"

As I write, it comes back to me again—the passion and the sweetness, the entering upon the wonderful new life, the baptism of joy to me, who had known so little...

It was an hour not to be forgotten; an hour, the very memory of which would be honey stored in the heart for a possible time of sorrow yet to come.

How new it all is to me, this perfect life; this perfect sympathy! I have never known it. The past does not hold it. As it dawns upon my darkened way—a possible, tangible joy—I am dazzled with its beauty and its brightness.

The future, as I ponder it here, alone in my sombre room, shines brighter and

brighter as I gaze. The new life upon which I have entered to-day unfolds itself before me. I see the days glide on, made perfect by that utter dependence of thought on thought, feeling on feeling; that quiet, every-day growth of nearness that gives to marriage its sacramental element, its special sanctity. To enjoy the good things of life together, to laugh at the droll things with a happy partnership in little jests all our own, which might seem stupid to other people, but which make us merry beyond all words; to let the sad things, and the heavy, weary days which must come sooner or later in all lives, only draw us nearer and nearer, since they have to be borne together.

"Darkness does but deepen love," when love is true, and deep, and pure.

I write like this, knowing that my darling's eyes will read the record word by word, and will like to know every thought of my heart.

I remember reading somewhere a pretty tale of two lovers who each kept a diary during their courting days, and on the day that they were wed, gave, each to the other, the journal of the past. And so it came about that in their after life, when any little jangling discord arose between them, each would remind the other of some sweet and tender thought recorded in those carefully-treasured heart-histories, and the cloud passed, and they "kissed again with tears."

Shall Mazie and I ever need such a talisman? I think not. Yet it pleases me to think that I will give her this, my journal, on our wedding-day; for I shall never need such record any more, never more be burdened with thought that can find no utterance, never more be sad or sorry, and lack a friend to tell it to.

My fancy is playing me strange tricks to-night. Strange and bewildering phantasies pass before my mind's eye.

It is our wedding-day; the tiny golden circlet that means so much is on your finger, Mazie, and you and I together are speeding across the land where all the cornfields are dressed in gold, bedecked with wealth of poppies, ripe and red. They look as if they are keeping festival for this, our marriage-morn—or so it seems to me. It is the time of hay carrying, and the air that comes in through the open carriage window is scented with the sweet, pungent hay.

My darling's hand lies restfully in mine; her dear eyes are soft and dreamy, full of

an uttermost content. There is a tremble round her mouth, as if the touch of my last kiss still thrilled and lingered there.

There is no one to come between us. We may be together always. We may take our fill of nearness.

We shall wander side by side through fairest scenes of Nature—that Nature which, like a vast book, is the full expression of the myriad-sided mind of God. We shall look upon everything with the same mind—see things with the same eye. It will be a happy, precious time, that short, sweet honeymoon of ours. Short it must be, for I may not leave my flock of black sheep for long. But then, fancy coming back to work with all my darling's never-failing sympathy to help me!

I should not wonder if some of our "bad cases" soften and resolve to strive after better things, under the influence of Mazie's gentle voice and passionate earnestness in winning souls to the love of right.

We shall have a little home of our own, I suppose, outside the prison walls; not far outside, though, or distance might be a hindrance.

I have never before fully entered into the feelings of the little woman on the King's highway, who is supposed to have uttered that plaintive song, "If this be I, as I suppose it be."

I suppose this is Louis Draycott, Prison Chaplain, writing up his diary, and feeling so unlike the "ego" that he has known for years past, and never known really glad at heart before, the man whose sole friend and confidant has been this book, so religiously kept under lock and key, so often hopelessly desolate in the spirit of its records.

It seems to me that I am a new man, and the "other man" has vanished—I know not whither!

Margaret, how hast thou been my good angel, leading me into that new and beautiful life, whose effulgence blinds me as I gaze! How hast thou won me from those terrible memories that, clinging about me, as sinuous weeds about the limbs of the swimmer, strove to drag me down into the depths of a morbid melancholy—an unfathomable despair!

With the touch of thy pure lips still lingering on mine, the love-light in thine eyes shining in my memory with pure and steadfast radiance, I raise my full heart to the Heaven that has so showered its choicest blessings on my long, solitary

path. I feel, I know, that in all this great city to-night there is no more grateful, thankful heart than mine.

It cannot be wondered that to me these precious hopes, these dear, delicious promises of joys to come are more infinitely dear than they could be to those who have a past to look back upon less black than mine. What of intensity have I ever known in life before? Of the pain of it—much. But of the passionate content of it—nothing!

Even writing of the past now, now in this high noon of joy into which Heaven has let me enter as into a sanctuary flooded with celestial light, even this light touching upon the days that are past is like tearing open a but half-healed wound. The bitterness, the degradation, the awful misery of it all, rises about me as from a grave; the pitiful daily and hourly effort to hide my shame and misery from those around me; the pity that I read in the eyes of some, breaking down my manhood and my pride, and laying them low in the dust; the agony of dread that the cause of the Master I served might be injured by the life I led; that the cause of Heaven and the right might suffer through the impatience and often bitterly rebellious fashion in which I bore that black and bitter cross laid on my weary shoulders—how it all comes back to me to-night! And no wonder; for to-night, as Dumphie and I together paced the quiet streets, we spoke of it, not openly, but in a veiled manner, and I said:

"You must come and see me, Dumphie, as you did last night, and we must have a talk together, not altogether like the last, for then the talking was on your side, and I took the part of listener. This time it will be for me to speak and you to listen. I want to tell you the story of my past life, keeping nothing back. It is right you should know all there is to know about me."

We were just under a lamp. Dumphie stopped short, took me by the lapel of my coat, and looked at me earnestly in the flickering light.

"I will listen to all you like to tell me," he said. "I will listen gladly, for everything about you has a deep interest for me. Still I should like to say now, I should like you to bear in mind afterwards, that I had said so before you told me a word—I have no fear that there is anything to hear that can shake my confidence one jot in Louis Draycott, or make me regret that I have

promised to give him the dearest thing I have on earth."

"There is nothing to make you regret that; there is nothing that would make me fear to ask Colonel Birt, if he stood alive here before us to-night, to trust the happiness of his daughter to my keeping. But there is much you ought to know—much better than I can tell Mazie. There have been many failures in my life, Dumphie; but nothing worse. Still, failure is bad enough, Heaven knows."

We were walking on together slowly, thoughtful, both of us; indeed, we spoke but little more until he bade me good-night and left me to go my way alone.

To-morrow night he will come, and I will tell him all.

It will hurt in the telling; but I can have no concealments with one himself so candid and fearlessly true.

If this journal of mine becomes for the future—I mean when Mazie is my wife—nothing more than a case-book; if all personal record becomes a thing of the past, and, even so, is only kept and cherished by my darling because it had been a part of me so long, I shall need no reminding of what these blessed days have brought. As the schoolboy cuts notches in a stick to mark the days that bring him nearer and nearer to his journey home, so on my heart is cut—and cut deep—the record of these happy weeks and months, full of new longings, new hopes, new fond desires and sweetness. Especially shall I remember, all my life to come, the month that is past; for, through it all, each day has brought me brighter hope, more firm conviction, that the heart of the woman I love is mine—that, by my comings and my goings, her gentle breast is stirred, her sympathy more and more vividly awakened in my life and work.

To-morrow will be May Day—happy time of festival, that ushers in the month of flowers. At three I am to be with Mazie . . . she will meet me with that radiant look that is more bright and beautiful than any I have seen on mortal face. I shall hold her close in my arms, and kiss the sweet lips that are so ready either to smile or tremble; that will always give me such true counsel, such precious words of comfort, such fond farewell, such tender greeting, even as my needs may be, for evermore. . . .

Four short months—and what a change in me, and in my life! I—who was so sure that Fate held in store for me nothing

fair, nothing precious—have found that all the sweetest gifts of life were garnered in her closed hand!

"For, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. . . . The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come."

The winter of desolation, the rain of tears, all past and gone, even as a tale that is told—even as a dream that is past.

But maybe, I had better not count upon to-morrow too much—for here is George to say that the warder wants me in the remand cell at once. A "bad case" was brought in this afternoon, and the said "case" has become unmanageable. I know, by long experience, what this sort of thing means. It means work—and plenty of it.

Well, well. Mazie is one of those grand and noble women who are always willing that a man's work for God in the world should come before everything—even themselves. I could not love her as I do—with heart, and mind, and soul, and strength—if it were not so.

END OF BOOK TWO.

OVER THE ROOF OF THE WORLD.

FRENCHMEN do travel, and to very out-of-the-way places. Herein, despite our close neighbourhood, we sometimes mistake the Frenchman's character, just as we do when we brand his nation—the most mathematical in the world—with frivolity. A French book of research is often far more satisfactory than a German one, because, while just as thorough, it is less imaginative. M. Bonvalot is one of those Frenchmen who are fond of going where scarcely anybody goes. He loves Central Asia (his taste is peculiar); and on his second visit he thought he would see what chance his Russian friends have of getting into India by a new route, over the Pamir plateau, which lies between Bokhara and Badakshan on the west, and Kashgar and Yarkand on the east.

It is not likely they will try. The Governor-General—after he had worked his way through the Kashmir valley, M. Bonvalot interviewed Lord Dufferin at Simla—has no need to be alarmed. No doubt the burglar sometimes gets in over the roof when the kitchen shutters are too strong for him, and there is no convenient

window on the first floor; but he doesn't try it in deep snow. And on the Pamir there is always snow enough to be embarrassing.

If the Hindoo Koosh between Balkh and Cabul is too much even for Russian enterprise, what of the much broader range, from Kokand round to Wakhan, over passes averaging nearly thirteen thousand feet, the thermometer varying (in April) from eighteen degrees below zero at ten p.m., to thirty degrees above zero in the shade at five p.m.? Noses bleeding, heads aching, ears singing, and a general sense of suffocation are only little discomforts for a tourist-party. But for an army they are a nuisance, especially when the horses suffer more from the nose-bleeding than the men. Of course one can imagine snow-ploughs, and galleries, and all the apparatus of the great American lines over the Rockies on a far greater scale. But the American line joins two parts of the same republic; a line across the Pamir would still have to deal with that higher barrier, the Hindoo Koosh, and then there would be the Kashmir valley to work through, with the Himalayas on its southern flank—altogether an unprofitable way of trying to come down on the plains of India.

Some day, however, and by some route or other, M. Bonvalot thinks the Russians will come down, to the delight of many discontented Hindoos. Between his two visits, the change which Russian occupation had wrought in what they have already annexed, struck him as marvellous. Slav gentleness and patience work wonders with the conquered people, while speed and organisation (Slav qualities likewise) are changing the aspect of what not many years ago was "independent Tartary," as rapidly as American "go ahead" is dotting the western prairies with new cities.

"The Russians," says M. Bonvalot, "are building up the Mogul empire backwards." And when one reads what he says about Persia, one cannot help wishing they would add that to their other conquests. Not a creditable set these Persians—drunken, beggar-ridden, their dances the obscenest, their lying the most outrageous in the world. Among the petty chiefs the worst vices of feudalism are in full play; the peasants are ground down in the most heartless manner, and naturally have become too lazy even to steal. It is all ripe for annexation already; a Governor's secretary took care to inform the Frenchmen that he was "a

Russian subject." And really people, who are too astonished to thank you when you pay your bill, and who are picking out the enamelled tiles from the beautiful cupolas at Veramine and elsewhere to sell to tourists, do not deserve to be under a Government of their own. Such a Shah, too, who, while his people are ruined with taxes, flings about in Europe like a drunken savage the money wrung from them.

Already the presence of the Russians at Merv has stopped the Turkomans, who used to do pretty nearly what they liked in the country, seeing that no one ever thought of resistance, and that the soldiers took care never to appear till the "enemy" was out of sight. Every field in Khorassan has its tower, like the "peel" on a Border farm, in which the farmer, with as much stock as he could stow away, would barricade himself as soon as a Turkoman appeared on the horizon. Now these towers are going to ruin. All along the heights were sentinels, watching for the long-legged horses with black-helmeted riders. "Save the flocks if you can; anyhow, save yourselves," was the watchword, for, fond as they were of other people's mutton, the Turkomans were fonder of good strong captives—they would sell better.

Often they would attack a caravan. A Persian told M. Bonvalot how, at a turn in the mountains, three hundred of them were set upon by fifty horsemen. That they should run seemed to him a thing to be not in the least ashamed of.

"Why, their horse-hoofs made a terrible clatter, and their sword-blades flashed, so that we had no heart left. Half were captured, and the robbers had their pick of the baggage. I crept into a karys, and when I came out I found others had done the same, and all that was left besides was the men who were too old to be worth carrying off, and the dead bodies that our pilgrims were carrying to be buried in holy ground, and our donkeys and their carts."

Lucky for him that there was a karys, that is, underground canal, close by. Such canals, covered in to prevent evaporation, were in use in Zoroaster's time. They are the only way of bringing the mountain springs down to the low ground. All along their course they have shafts for clearing out the earth that gets washed down; and to sit by one of these is like sitting by the gates of Paradise, while, to go down inside, into complete shade, with fresh water dancing by, is Paradise itself.

Russia cannot improve upon the karys, nor on the bargaining which makes an Eastern bazaar such a picture of confusion. M. Bonvalot tells of an Arab pilgrim and his wife chaffering for twopenny-worth of barley, at Nichapur. Of course the Persian dealer had mixed sand and stones with his corn, and managed to catch his foot in the scale and make it untrue.

But the Arab was a match for him. After an amount of harsh guttural shouting, his long arms flung wildly about through his burnous, he pulled out his purse and gravely counted the money. The coins were at once found to be bad, and the Arab, as angry as if the salesman had changed them by sleight of hand, at last counted out others one by one. But no sooner had he got his barley than, holding the bag with the gesture of a prophet in the wilderness, he said it was too light, and, proving the fact by a second weighing, insisted on his money being returned. Then off he went, muttering, and consoled himself for his loss of time by seizing, with a hawk's swoop, a lump of sugar from a tea-stall close by. How grand the old thief looked in his rags!

But the business was not over. He meant to have that barley; so up came his wife, so thin that her cheek-bones seemed coming through her mummy-like skin, and her shoulder-blades stuck out like planks under her dark homespun. She squatted down in front of the barley-sacks and turned the grain over with her bony fingers, munching a little every now and then. At last, after two or three false starts, the bargain was finished, the coins counted out—with the air of one who would say: "What a lucky man you are to get so much"—and off she stalked, like a gigantic stork, as majestic in her way as her husband.

These people enjoy the pilgrim life just as much as our forefathers did all Europe over in the Middle Ages. Any one who has once begun the life never gives it up; for, to a man who all his life has seen nothing but a Tartar or Syrian village, it must be as pleasant a change as globe-trotting is to one who is tired of Pall Mall and Bond Street. And then, the pilgrim never overdoes it, as the "tourist" so often does. Time is no object, and he lives almost as cheaply on the road as he would at home.

Persia is full of pilgrimage places. Meshed, where is buried the Imam Riza, the fifth from Ali, whom the Shiites specially reverence, is a holy city, par excellence, and very

unwholesome, too, for the whole place is one big cemetery—bodies from everywhere, even as far as the heart of lesser Asia, being sent there for burial—and, naturally, the water is full of organic matter.

That was M. Bonvalot's route. Landing at Batoum, which has already become such a thriving place that one forgets how unfairly Russia got hold of it, he pushed on through Persia to Merv. As he neared the frontier, he found that the Persians grew more and more bigoted. At one little town they came out like a swarm of ants, and attacked his native servant for "serving the infidel." The Frenchmen had to rescue him by a free use of their whips. One big fellow, stripped to the waist and wielding a huge club, had gone into religious convulsions, and gnashed his teeth and howled. He was reasonable enough, however, to respect the muzzle of a rifle brought pretty near to his head, and at last subsided with the rest. Nothing could be bought save by threats; and when the price was offered, "Throw it on the ground," the seller called out. "Why?" "Because it is unclean from your hands." And before picking it up the Persian rubbed his foot on the coins, so that the dust might take off their impurity.

At Sarakhs, the frontier, Russia begins. She has annexed the great sandy desert reaching, "like a true carpet of gratitude," as the Persians say, northward to Khiva, and eastward almost to Bokhara. The Russians did their best with the Tekke Turkomans. The most given to plundering they formed into a corps of guides. Other restless spirits are embodied as militia, and are delighted by being employed against their hereditary foes, the Afghans. All they now want is water for the land, which their conquerors insist on their tilling.

During their war with Russia, the Turkomans were very clever at rifle stealing. An old man, quite decrepit-looking, would painfully drag himself into the encampment, and after waiting for hours with the patience of a savage, would, when it got dark, take a gun off the pile under the sentry's very nose, and glide noiselessly away. A successful way of winning over Uzbek and Tartar chiefs of all kinds is to invite them to your capital and show them some grand fêtes. The Bey of Hissar told M. Bonvalot how he was at St. Petersburg when the Czar was crowned, and how nothing on earth was ever so splendid. We may be sure he was not sent to a third-rate hotel,

and made to pay his own bill. "The true Shah in Shah (King of Kings)," said he, "is not he of Persia, but the White Czar." This same Bey would show the travellers the wonderful fortress of Karatag, "built in one night at the earnest prayer of a saint." Its recent history has not been saintly. Its owner, an Uzbek of old family, named Abdul-Kerim, thought he could rebel against the Emir of Bokhara; but he was conquered, and the Emir, to prevent similar risings, had a thousand heads chopped off and stuck all round the battlements of Karatag. The Emir looks, in Mr. Pepin's sketch, a benignly handsome man; but his subjects must be glad to have exchanged his rule for that of Russia. The splendid rooms of the castle are almost as when their last lord was living in them. Indeed, that is the second castle empty, but not in ruins, which M. Bonvalot found in Bokhara. And it seemed very strange to be wandering freely through harem and bath-room and audience-hall, just as if it was a European show-house.

Soon after this came a great disappointment. At Tchour-Tepe, not far from Balkh, the party was firmly, but decidedly stopped. "No one," said the officers of the Afghan outpost, "can cross the Oxus unless he has a written order from the Emir." M. Bonvalot's Persian firman was useless; equally useless was his assertion that he was neither Russian nor English, but French.

Turned back, at Tchour-Tepe, from what was the direct route, via Balkh and Cabul, to India, M. Bonvalot has the Pamir route put into his head on his return to Samarcand, by his old friend General Karalkoff.

"Winter's the best time," says the General, "for there'll be no robbers about, nor any Chinese scouts. If you find the Alai range—where there will be the deepest snow—impassable, you can go round by Kashgar and Yarkand to Ladak, and so across the passes of the Karakorum."

So, on the fourteenth of January, the Frenchmen sledged away from Samarcand, passing "the seven cities" which Alexander captured, and pushing on from Khodjend to Khokand. At Marguilane they decided on trying the route by the Taldik, thence to the Pass of Kizil Art, skirting the Lake of Kara Kul, and out through the Pass of Kara Art by the head waters of the Oxus. This seemed the likeliest way of avoiding the Afghan Scylla on the one

hand and the Chinese Charybdis on the other.

Anybody who intends going such a road should read M. Bonvalot's elaborate preparations. Presents, a plated Winchester rifle for the Khan of Kunjut, on the Indian border; silk sashes, looking-glasses, ear-rings, etc., to give away; arms in case they are wanted; sugar, salt, cloth bearing the Chinese customs' stamp; silver bars, cut up in trading just as you cut a stick of liquorice; bladdered mutton, which keeps as well as tinned, and is far more palatable; bread for a month; sixty pounds of dried apricots; horse clothing of double felt; and a ton of barley—such a temptation that, no wonder, some of the Kirghis decamped with a good quantity of it.

Besides all this they had to take a good deal of fuel to supplement the wild-sheep-droppings, which are the staple in those parts where even juniper-bush roots fail.

At last, on the sixteenth of March, they got under way. Three Frenchmen, a faithful Circassian—who had been with them throughout—a Bokhara man, and three others, dressed in proper marching costume—stockings of Kashgar felt, boots of ditto drawn over the leather boots, leather trousers over the thick-lined cloth ones, two pelisses, one of sheep-skin, and over the sheep-skin cap a ditto hood, which will draw over head and face, leaving two eye-holes, which the more provident of the party lightly fill with horsehair wads. Such figures of fun they look in M. Pepin's sketches—the guns slung over their shoulders, packed in double sheep-skin cases!

For these eight there are twenty horses; but, besides, a score of Kirghis with fifty horses help to get them and their baggage on to the Pamir, where the sweeping wind prevents the snow from being so deep. So it was quite a little army, and the story reads like what Livy says of Hannibal crossing the Alps—horses tumbling about and getting up to their ears in snow, men floundering up to their waists in big drifts, packs shifting and having to be unloaded, the ice on the ropes making untying a sorry business.

No wonder, when a halt is called, nearly everybody is half blind, and almost suffocated. One man lies on his back close to his horse, which has fallen on its side; another has fallen asleep as he rests his head against his saddle; a third is holding

on by the tail, and whipping his poor beast that has fallen into a hole. Fortunately, there were no glaciers to cross, and therefore no crevasses; but six weeks of pounding along through boulder-stone passes, one more than fifteen thousand seven hundred feet above the sea level, with the mercury now and then frozen, and a fire sometimes taking an hour to light, was enough, without the addition of Alpine dangers. The wind was as much as human nature could bear; and frequently snow came with it. Indeed, instead of grumbling at the Kirghis for wanting to desert, M. Bonvalot might have asked himself whether a score of Europeans could have been got to go through half as much. They are not handsome-looking, these Kirghis; but really, on the whole, they behaved very well, though they knew that, were the Chinese to find out what was going on, they would be put to death for aiding the travellers. Once our Frenchmen had a narrow escape of being handed over to the Mandarins, and perhaps put in a cage and sent up to headquarters. The man who saved them, and gave them confidence—they had got very low-spirited—and piloted them through a blizzard, and guided their horses over the shoulder of a precipice, where steps had to be cut for them in the ice, and four men told off to each to keep it from slipping—this godsend of a guide they met with by pure accident. His son-in-law had spied them, and brought a sheep for sale, and, as their guide had decamped, they were glad indeed to accept the stranger's offer. It was about time; threats had become useless with the Kirghis baggage-men. M. Bonvalot tried blows, but one poor fellow laid down, and vowed he would kill himself if he was touched.

The new man was not only a clever guide, but also a saint—very useful for encouraging the recreants. He had been a great ruffian—the Pamir, being a no-man's land, is a sort of Alcatraz—but, dreaming he was at night in a raging river, the torrent sucking him down to an abyss, and the shore receding every time he rose to the surface, he took warning, began to say "the five prayers" day by day; took up the dervish's staff; and every year makes a pilgrimage to Khodjend to listen to readings out of the holy books.

In his own tribe he at once became the great peacemaker and arbitrator, besides praying for sick and newly-born. And his faithfulness to M. Bonvalot was some-

thing touching. When some horsemen wanted to turn the party back on pain of displeasing His Imperial Majesty, the Chinese Emperor, the derviah-guide said :

"Yes, I know I'm risking my life. The Chinese are cruel, but I'm not afraid of them. I'm only afraid of doing what's wrong. Allah!"

Of course nearly all the horses died, and the Kirghis dribbled away, and had to be replaced by others who would not stir a yard without being paid beforehand. No wonder, when a man sees a few miles ahead a white wall, over which these strange Feringhis invite him to make his way, and convey their baggage, he says, "Bismillah," being a Mahometan; but, being a man also, he looks about for some way of escape. What kept the party alive was the good humour consequent on their always sleeping like tops, in the fine, dry, frosty air. The Circassian, too, always had a song for the bivouac, and the Bokhara man was an unwearied storyteller, telling the old tale of Iskander and Dara (Alexander and Darius), and how "when Dara was a-dying he laid his head on Iskander's knees and prayed: 'Treat my family well, and kill them that have killed me;' and how Iskander conquered the five parts of the world, and married the Emperor of Tain's (China's) daughter, and with his lance killed fishes that had bars of gold in their stomachs." Then there was always plenty of tea and millet porridge; and sometimes they shot an arker (wild sheep). And a few Kirghis were met now and again with their yaks—"all hair and no legs." The Circassian insisted on riding one—and a comical figure he looked—and sometimes a camel (we do not think of camels as living on the snow-line as comfortably as in the desert). At last they got to Wakhan and through the Hindoo Koosh, with birch and willow trees and grass here and there, instead of the wormwood of which their horses had been so glad on the Pamir.

But he had gone through all this, this eccentric Frenchman, only to be stopped once more, and by the same Affghans who turned him back at Tchour-Tepa. He had got as far as Tchatal, and Peshawur was almost within reach, when a peremptory chief said they must not go on without an order from the Governor-General. This was on the eighteenth of May, and it was more than seven weeks before Lord Dufferin's permit came, along with a letter saying that all had been done to make their way

as smooth as possible. Fortunately, time seems to have been no object, though one cannot help thinking the game was hardly worth the candle. Time passed pleasantly enough. Despite their ragged garments, the Frenchmen managed to make the Affghans think a good deal of them; their two dogs, trained to bite the calves of all intruders, helped to make them respected. The Bokhara man alone grumbled sadly:

"Why don't you kill a chief," said he, "steal his horses, and let us ride on at full speed, changing horses whenever we have the chance, and hamstringing any that might be used to pursue us?"

M. Bonvalot calmed him by telling him La Fontaine's fables, which, having come originally from the Far East, may thus be said to have made the round of the world.

In Kashmir, when at last they were allowed to go forward, they found French friends and very good Burgundy. Then there was the ceremonial visit of thanks to Simla; and then homeward from Kur-rachee to Port Said.

It was a weary trip, and one fancies it must have cost many bars of silver to satisfy those Kirghis; and then one asks: "What was the good of it?" I cannot find that M. Bonvalot gathered any specimens, or made any scientific observations beyond taking the temperature. It was too cold for that sort of thing; how M. Pepin managed to take his sketches is a puzzle. One thing the travellers found—that, except mountain ranges, there is little or nothing to be seen. The "Roof of the World" seems, after all, a dull place, on which no one would care to stay longer than is absolutely necessary.

But M. Bonvalot's book is amusing; he jokes in season and out of season. Sometimes the grave Orientals were scandalised at him; but there is a deal of fun in a Tartar when you know how to get at it. Perhaps the best joke in the book is when his invaluable Circassian—who went the whole round with him to Port Said—gave five roubles to a quack to cure his horse, the recipe being: "Strip yourself stark naked, take the horse by the tail, kick him thrice on the quarter, and then recite after me a prayer my grandfather taught me, and that no one else in the world knows." The fun of it is, that the horse, which was in a dying state, got better!

Naturally, M. Bonvalot does not love the Affghans. They are, he found, great boasters. They hate the English and the

Russians; but they fear the latter. "But for them," they say, "we would soon have annexed Bokhara, and pushed our conquests on to Siberia; while, on the other side, it is only Russia that has kept us from conquering Persia. The Russians are poor; but they have multitudes of soldiers. The English are made of money; why, a Colonel of theirs gets six thousand rupees a month." Afghan feeling, even as it came under M. Bonvalot's notice, is worth taking account of.

THE SWALLOW.

No member of the feathered tribes is more popular with us than the swallow; nor do we stand alone in this respect, for all the world over, swallows are favoured by man. The savage Indian, even, welcomes them, and provides a receptacle for their nests. The Choctaws and Chicashaws cut off all the top branches from some small tree near their cabins, leaving prongs a foot or two in length, in each of which they hang a gourd, properly hollowed out for the convenience of the birds; and the wild tribes who dwell along the banks of the Mississippi provide for them in a similar fashion. Wherever they are found, swallows frequent, rather than shun, places occupied by man; and the reason for this may be found in the greater abundance of insects in such localities.

Superstitious people think that dire misfortunes are in store for the reckless mortal who kills a swallow or destroys its nest. This idea probably arose from the breach of hospitality involved in the destruction of a bird which shelters itself beneath our very roof. On the other hand, good luck is supposed to be in store for the inmates of the house which swallows choose for their home; and, in days gone by, there was held to be no surer sign of impending ill-luck than their desertion of a house on which they had once built their nests. The association of misfortune with the wilful destruction of swallows can be traced to the earliest times. We learn from Ælian that the ancients considered them sacred to the Penates, or household gods; their preservation, therefore, became a matter of religious concern, and whoever injured one was held to insult the deity to whom it was consecrated.

The Rhodians had a solemn anniversary song, which they used to chant by way of

welcoming these birds, which they looked upon as harbingers of spring. Anacreon's "Ode to the Swallow" is too well known to call for any but a passing allusion. That the ancient soothsayers looked upon swallows as one of their chief means of divination is, perhaps, not known to the majority of readers of the classics, but in an old book emphasis is laid upon this fact. We are told that, "by swallows lighting upon Pirrhos' tents, and lighting upon the masts of Mar. Antonius' ship sailing after Cleopatra to Egypt, the soothsayers did prognosticate that Pirrhos should be slain at Argos in Greece, and Mar. Antonius in Egypt." We read further that swallows followed King Cyrus, going with his army from Persia to Scythia, as ravens followed Alexander the Great on his return from India, and on his way to Babylon. And even as the Magi told the Persians that Cyrus should die in Scythia, so the Chaldean astrologers informed the Macedonians that their King should die in Babylon, "without any further warrant but by the above swallows and ravens."

In some parts of the country swallows are looked upon as forerunners of death. A correspondent of "Notes and Queries," on visiting the sick child of a poor woman, had the following remark made to her by the child's mother:

"A swallow lit upon her shoulder, ma'am, a short time since, as she was walking home from church, and that is a sure sign of death."

This is a scarcely more complimentary view to take of the bird than that which is common in some districts of Ireland, where it is anything but a favourite, for the poor people call it "the devil's bird," from a strange belief that on every one's head is a particular hair, which, if a swallow can pluck it off, dooms the wretched individual to eternal perdition.

Belgian peasants believe that where the swallow settles lightning will never fall; and that, when autumn comes, it forms itself into a ball and passes in some mysterious way under the sea to warmer climes.

Russian peasants think that it is the bearer of warmth from Paradise to the earth; they believe that its presence keeps off fire and lightning, that its early arrival foretells an abundant harvest, and that permanent freckles will appear all over the face of any one who robs its nest.

Another superstition tells how young swallows lose their sight a few days after

they are hatched, and how the parent birds fly off to distant lands and bring back in their beaks a certain marvellous stone, with which they touch the eyes of their young ones, with the result that sight is restored to them again. Longfellow refers to this legend in "Evangeline," when he says :

Seeking with eager eyes that wondrous stone, which
the swallow
Brings from the shore of the sea to restore the sight
of its fledglings.

Norway and Sweden are not too far north for the swallow to find its way to them; and the Scandinavians have a legend that this bird hovered over the Cross, singing, "Svate! svate!" (cheer up! cheer up!), and hence it was given the name of Svate, or Swallow—"the bird of consolation."

The Germans are always very anxious that their houses should be selected by swallows to build upon, for they think that the bird's presence preserves the house they select from all danger by fire or storm, and, indeed, from every kind of evil.

Some days before swallows leave us, they assemble together, usually beside a river, where they wait for fresh arrivals, till a flock of many thousands is collected. Did we not know that similar gatherings were going on in many other places, we could well imagine that every swallow in the kingdom was in this particular spot.

At Rotherham, in 1815, it was firmly believed that this was the case. Early in September a wonderful assemblage of the birds commenced; their numbers kept on increasing day by day, until myriads upon myriads of them were collected. They roosted in some willows, and at about six o'clock every morning, rose from these in four, five, or six great divisions, each of which flew off, taking a different route from the rest, not only, it was supposed, in order that they might be distributed equally to search for food, but also to gather in any stragglers that they might encounter. In the evening they would return from every quarter of the compass, reaching the willows some as early as five o'clock; some not until the sun had set. This went on till the seventh of October, when the whole vast army rose in one mass, and winged its way south. Probably they would have left sooner, but, for some days previous to their departure, there had been a contrary wind; as soon

as this changed they took advantage of it and went.

There are several other accounts of extraordinarily large gatherings of these birds at the beginning of the century; and the fact that we never hear of them nowadays as reaching such immense proportions, is one of the principal grounds for the assertion made by many naturalists, that swallows do not visit our shores in nearly such large numbers as used to be the case.

The winter retreat of swallows has been a subject that has attracted attention in all ages. It has been supposed by some that on the approach of cold weather they retire to the inmost recesses of rocks, mountains, or decayed trees, and there lie torpid until the return of spring rouses them to active life again. There is just enough foundation for this idea to enable us to understand its prevalence in former times.

Solitary swallows have been observed long after their fellows have left our shores; and again, a few birds sometimes appear long before the regular immigration has commenced. These are no doubt members of second broods, which were hatched so late in the season that they had not sufficient strength of wing to fly off with their fellows. They lie torpid in some sheltered spot, and an unusually warm, bright day in late autumn or early spring will bring them out. Several have been found together, nestling under the thatch in a barn; and it is these isolated cases which led men to believe that all swallows remained with us in a torpid state through the winter.

Gilbert White was a supporter of this theory. He says that swallows "Do not depart from this island; but lay themselves up in holes and caverns; and do, insect-like and bat-like, come forth at mild times, and then retire again to their 'latebræ.'" A far more extraordinary hypothesis than this is that of the "subaqueous hybernation" of these birds during the winter. It is difficult to understand how any but the most ignorant persons could bring themselves to believe in such an absolutely impossible idea; and yet many naturalists have given it their support; amongst them Klein and Linnaeus. Indeed, the belief that swallows pass the winter at the bottom of ponds or rivers, is still prevalent in some out-of-the-way parts of England. In support of the theory, Bishop Stanley, in his "History of Birds," mentions the following fact:

"On the second of November, 1829, at Lock Ransa, in the island of Arran, a man, whilst digging in a place where a pond had been drained off, discovered two swallows in a state of torpor. On placing them near a fire, they recovered."

It is most likely that these birds had been left behind, and had found their way into some partially-concealed hole after the pond was drained. Most latter-day writers on birds treat the idea of hibernation under water as being too extravagant to need serious refutation. The Rev. Mr. Fleming, however, brings forward several unanswerable arguments to disprove it. He says that swallows are much lighter than water, and could not, therefore, sink in clusters as they are represented to do; and asks, if their feathers are previously wetted to destroy their buoyant power, in what manner can they resist the decomposing effect of six months' maceration in water, and appear in spring as fresh and glossy as those of other birds?

Swallows do not moult while they remain with us in an active state; so, if they submerge, they either do not moult at all, or they perform the process under water. In the case of other torpid animals, some vital actions are performed, and a portion of oxygen is consumed; but in the case of submerged swallows, respiration, and consequently circulation, must cease. Other animals, too, in retiring for their winter alibers, consult safety; while the swallows, in sinking under the water, select the place where the otter and the pike commit their depredations.

We can easily imagine, however, that some stories of fishermen having drawn living swallows from rivers in their nets are perfectly true. Towards the middle of autumn swallows frequently roost at the edges of rivers. It is quite likely that they might settle for the night on the bank of a shallow and muddy river at low tide, and that they should be induced by cold to creep among the reeds that are partially covered by the water when the tide is up. In such a case, it is not difficult to conceive them caught by the water, and swept away into the stream.

Fishermen naturally go out to catch fish on the incoming of the tide, and there is nothing wonderful in the fact that they should draw in some half-dead swallows with their nets. Still, as one swallow does not make a summer, so a few cases of this sort cannot establish the theory of

hibernation beneath the water. As a matter of fact, the majority of the swallows which flit over our streams and meadows during the warmer months, wing their way to Africa when the shortening days and chilly nights warn them that it is time to seek some more genial climate. A few swallows winter in the oases which are scattered about the northern edge of the Great Desert; but the main body of migrants from the shores of these islands extend their journey considerably beyond this point. At Sierra Leone and on the River Senegal, swallows abound at all seasons of the year; but from May to October they are far less plentiful there, showing that a large contingent of them has flown northwards. Mr. Yarrell tells us that in January and February, swallows are to be seen on the West Coast of Africa as far south as the island of St. Thomas, on the Equator. Natal becomes alive with these birds in November, and is deserted by them again in March and April. After Africa, the favourite winter resort of our swallows seems to be the North-West Provinces of India, where they are found in considerable numbers during the months in which fog and frost reign over the British Isles.

Swallows were formerly used extensively in medicine. In an old work, entitled "A Book of Knowledge," is given the remedy for "the sinews that are shrunk in the thighe or elsewhere," which consists of twelve young swallows pounded up with rosemary, bay leaves, lavender, strawberry leaves, and hog's grease. This mixture was to be set in the sun for the space of a month, then boiled, and strained, and the ointment kept. It was in this that the virtue lay; and with it patients are told to "anoint the place grieved, and with God's blessing it will do much good."

The efficacy of swallows in remedial ways is very highly spoken of in a medical book published in 1654, in which one Nicholas Culpepper, "Student of Physick and Astrology," tells us that, "Swallows, being eaten, clear the sight; the ashes of them (being burnt), eaten, preserve from drunkenness, help sore throats, being applied to them, and inflammation." Many popular works on medicine, published long after Culpepper's time, give similar recipes. In conclusion, we may notice the curious fact that swallows, which we naturally associate with ideas of spring, are almost invariably alluded to by our poets in connection with summer.

THE DUMB SPEAKS.

Look on us two, I pray you—her and me—
 The woman sitting where the flickering gleams
 Of firelight fall upon her face and hair;
 I in the window, shrouded in the gloom
 That creeps on slowly with the dying day.
 You can just trace my features, common, pale,
 Like many others that you daily see.
 But look at her! Even the flickle flame
 Pauses, and holds its quivering breath at times,
 As though it longed to linger lovingly
 Over the wealth of beauty it reveals.
 See—you can watch her from the window here,
 Where many a night I watch her as she dreams
 In the grey twilight, with no thought of me
 (Unless she dreams that I am dreaming too);
 But here I crouch and scan that perfect face;
 Read all the changing thoughts that come and go,
 Playing like summer lightning in her eyes,
 Waking the dimpled curves about the mouth,
 Now grave, now gay—as visions rise and fall.
 And when each night he comes—whose very step
 Sends through my frame a sudden, nameless thrill,
 While all my heart burns in a still white flame,
 And all my being grows one silent cry
 For just one look to slake my raging thirst—
 One word to still the craving hunger here—
 I know how she will lift those languorous lids,
 Sweeping their silken fringe up to unveil
 A soft, slow smile of greeting—while he reads
 Deep in the still, grey, dreamy mystery
 All that we other women—commonplace—
 Might yearn and struggle all our lives to speak
 In piteous, mute impotence—yea, all
 My closed lips must not—my eyes cannot say.

How should I blame him? Who would bear the
 weed
 Set in his heart, when he might wear the rose?
 Who but would still the feeble sparrow-chirp
 To hear the golden-throated nightingale?
 Though both the birds would speak the self-same
 thing.

And every man sees heaven, once a life
 Dawn through the firmament of woman's eyes—
 Revealing worlds unknown to him before
 And bathing all things in a great new light—
 A tide of wondrous possibilities
 Of love, and strength, and joy, where self is not—
 And would I dim that vision's perfectness
 Or blot it from the sight of him I love
 Because my own hand could not lift the veil?
 No! though that woman's face for evermore
 Closes the door of earthly love on me,
 I glory in its beauty all the same;
 I would not mar one of those faultless lines
 Nor pale one tint of all its loveliness—
 It is not hers alone who wears the face,
 It is a voice to speak for all her kind.
 Have there not always been, from age to age,
 Some here and there (though few and far between)
 Graced with the heaven-born, mighty power to
 speak

What all the rest could only dumbly feel?
 The painter on his canvas shadows forth
 Some echo of the glories we have seen
 In waking dreams, of colour and of form,
 The ideal beauty after which we pine
 That floats for evermore before our eyes.
 Hear the musician striving to express
 The world-wide cry for perfect harmony,
 The strange pathetic, yearning hopes and fears
 That heave and moan deep in the heart of man!
 Fain would the Poet speak the mighty thoughts,
 The wordless aspirations after truth,
 That lift our nature almost up to Heaven—
 Yet must these need be partial—they who speak
 Are only little parts of one great whole;
 Can only whisper faintly, separately,
 Each but a note half heard—a light half seen.

God's gift to beauty is the power to speak
 Where art is lifeless—even music dumb;
 Look in her face! all are concentrated there,
 Colour, and rhythm, yea, and harmony—
 Just as the sevenfold mighty tints of heaven
 Are gathered up and shine forth uniform
 In the pure light of day.

This is God's voice—
 This the Great Artist's visible Ideal
 Revealed in living faultlessness of line
 And perfect colour, and fair light and shade—
 The One Musician's soul of harmony,
 In silence speaking that which sound would mar—
 The Most High Poet's idyll in a word—
 And all who will may see, and hear, and know.

I will be glad, then, since the word is spoke,
 Rejoicing that it finds so fair a voice—
 And still the wait that rises in my heart
 Crying "Yet I am dumb!"

I hear his step!
 Look! though the firelight burns so dim and low,
 I see him, as I see him every night,
 Bend down to read my secret in her eyes,
 To watch my love play on her perfect lips,
 To feel my heart beat in her snowy breast—
 And he is satisfied—he hears the word—
 What though he cannot know the voice? I speak,
 Albeit I am dumb!

ANNORA.

A COMPLETE STORY.

It is an odd story, and a terrible one;
 but absolutely true. I knew Annora
 Masters; I have stood by her grave often,
 and thought how little we know of life or
 of each other.

I have studied character a good deal.
 I am a novelist, so it has become like
 second nature to me to analyse motives
 and actions. It has been so through a
 long life. The habit has only strengthened
 with added years; but in Annora I studied
 nothing; could study nothing.

A country town is a very good place
 for gaining and adding to knowledge of
 that sort. The inhabitants, to an extent
 hardly realised by people who do not
 know them, live in common; I mean,
 they have all known each other and each
 other's faults and failings since they were
 children together; and the feelings formed
 then, and the keen interest in each other's
 affairs, last on through middle age and the
 downhill part of life.

Every one knew Lucy Cherry. Every
 one in the town liked her. Most of the
 young fellows—I was young then, and
 one of them—did more than like her.

When she came into church on Sunday
 mornings, a look of agonised expectation
 would come over about thirty faces in the
 congregation. They all gazed eagerly at
 Lucy in the hope of one glance from her
 as she went up the very short part of the
 aisle leading to the square pew where the

Cherrys sat. Square pews were not gone then. A great mistake it was, surely, that they ever did go. Sleep during the sermon is what most of us secretly wish for. Under the new arrangement, though, who is bold enough to take it?

Lucy would sometimes look up—not often—during those moments of her quick walk behind her brother. On whichever side of the aisle her glance fell, radiant faces were visible; on the other side a proportionate despair showed itself. Had they not been in a place where private sentiments are rarely manifested, the relations between those gentlemen would instantly have become extremely “strained.”

It was not to be wondered at. Lucy was very pretty. Brown hair—just the sort which most becomes a woman—soft and wavy; blue, dark-blue, eyes; and a tall figure, straight and upright as an arrow. It is neither here nor there to say that I never saw a woman like her; and had I ever married—but how could I, when she never even gave a thought to me? Still, the fact intensified my feelings afterwards, when—but, evidently, even the practice I have had is not able to hinder me from telling this story confusedly, unless I take care. Well, I am growing old, and it was terrible. I do not half like the task I have set myself.

One Sunday came, when both sides of the aisle showed only disconsolate countenances. Lucy looked neither on one side nor the other. She looked on the ground to hide a very pretty blush, and then fixedly on her brother's broad shoulders, as he, good soul, walked in front, thinking of nothing less than his sister.

She was engaged to be married—we had all heard it in the week—to a doctor, who had recently bought a practice in the town. He had many friends, and few enemies, and was decidedly popular. Clever, he was most certainly; strikingly handsome; and so pleasant to talk with, that every one who met him did stop and talk to him.

This is a man's praise of a man, so it is not likely to be overdone, and it is hardly likely that I should have any reason for overpraising the man who won the only girl I ever cared for.

No; I did not wonder at Lucy. No one did. And they looked so well together—she so sweet and womanly, he so thoroughly manly, and yet so gentle, to give the

much-abused compound word its real force.

Lucy, perhaps in mercy to us—perhaps to him—was content with only six weeks' engagement, and their wedding was fixed for New Year's Day.

The weather that winter was unusually cold and dreary, and on the last day of the old year there was a terrible snow-storm, which lasted all day, and only ended just in time to let the clouds roll away from a fiery red sunset. New people came to the town in the middle of the snow-storm, people who had recently taken one of the few large red-brick houses the town possessed—a really large house, standing in its own large, old-fashioned garden. But every one who knew her—and that was all the town—was so taken up with thinking of Lucy's wedding, that no one bestowed a thought at the time on what would at any other have been a great excitement—the arrival of the new tenants, Annora Masters and her husband. I use the words advisedly, for those two names could go in no other order.

Not until next morning when I, with several of my friends, who hardly felt it their happiest day of life, stood in church, watching Lucy's sweet face and her husband's handsome, manly figure, did I ever think of the new people.

And then I thought of them, because, among the crowd in the body of the church, I saw a woman whose face haunts me—will haunt me till nothing earthly can trouble me longer. Tall, dark; dressed entirely in black, with black hair, and eyes which even through her veil burned with a flashing sort of light. If it had not been impossible to look at Annora Masters for more than an instant, I should have been able to know certainly if there was really a dull red light in them, as I fancied, like glowing fires in her white face.

She stood among a quantity of townspeople; but, after I had looked at her, it seemed that no one else but Lucy and the tall, dark woman was in the church. She was watching Lucy with those eyes, and I thought, I fancied, that everything lovely and bridal about Lucy seemed for that moment an ashen grey.

Then Lucy passed out of the door into the snow, which fell fast on her veil. I came out, too, and followed at a distance, and as Annora Masters went up the High Street and in at the garden door of the long untenanted house, I

knew that I must have seen the new tenant.

The townspeople called on Annora Masters. Every one said the same thing, or, rather, no one gave any opinion of her, and only, when pressed, said :

"She is strange, don't you think?"

Annora returned none of the calls but Lucy's; and was only seen at church, where she appeared with a regularity which was part of her strangeness, it struck me—so utterly out of place did she look there. I cannot say why; no one could; but the woman was awful, in an utterly indefinable manner, and peace and goodness seemed at odds with everything about her. Of her household and house-keeping no one knew anything. Servants they had brought with them—two plain, middle-aged women. Her husband we saw beside her when she went out on Sundays. And he went up to London—a journey of only twenty miles—every day. He was supposed to be that indefinable individual, a "business man." At least, he went to London every day, till the day we were all shocked and startled by hearing that Mr. Masters was dead.

Yes—dead—suddenly. Lucy's husband went to see him. A London doctor came down, and together they carried out the post-mortem examination, which was of course insisted on, and to which Annora made not the least objection. They could find nothing, nothing whatever, to cause death. All was right; there was no latent disease, no injury. The man we had seen alive and well on Sunday was dead on Tuesday—that was all.

"From unknown causes," the verdict at the inquest ran.

Lucy, in her kindness, went to see Annora Masters after this. "To comfort her," she said. But apparently Annora would have no comfort. For Lucy, whom I met a few days later, asked me seriously if I had ever seen Annora Masters close; if I—lowering her voice—thought she was mad.

She had, Lucy said, grasped her wrists tightly, and said, when Lucy tried to say some of the words her own sweet heart taught her :

"Death! Sometimes death brings one what one wants! It is life that is wrong."

Then she broke off suddenly; and, dropping Lucy's hands, begged her to come and see her again.

"The oddest thing," Lucy went on, "is that Harry is sure he has seen Mrs. Masters before somewhere, and can't remember where. He hates her," Lucy said, very low. "I don't—quite like her. She——"

"You couldn't, my——"

I had forgotten, I sometimes did, that Lucy was not my darling. The thought was often bad to bear, so I lifted my hat and left her abruptly.

One warm spring day, three months later, I was passing the old red-brick house, when one of the maid-servants rushed out hastily, nearly knocking me down.

"Oh!" she cried, "come in, sir, do, while I go for the doctor. Jane's fainted, and mistress, she does nothing but stand looking at Mrs. Bent, and doing nothing to bring her round. Do make her, sir, for mercy's sake!"

"Mrs. Bent!" I said, grasping the woman's arm like a vice. "What is it? Tell me!"

"She's fainted, sir, and I can't get her round, and mistress—there, sir, let me go."

I did let her go, rushed up the garden, and unceremoniously indoors and upstairs, into a large room where I saw—what I can see now—Lucy, white, ashen white, lying motionless on the dark rug, and Annora Masters standing by the mantel-piece, with one arm resting on it, gazing on the woman at her feet.

I don't know what I did—seized Annora's arm, I think. Still less do I know what I said—words of intense hate and burning anger, I know—but when she turned slowly and, with a slow, contemptuous smile on her lips, looked at me, the flashing red light in her eyes turned me to silence. I had no more words.

I, whose love, whose passion lay dead there, could say no more, could not speak!

I knelt down by Lucy, and hid my face in my hands. Something so surely made me know that Lucy was dead—gone beyond power of our help—that I never tried to touch or raise the white marble face. And then—I do not remember anything else.

I was ill, very ill, for a long time after that. When I got well I asked, of course, before anything, about Lucy. Gone, I knew she was; but when and how?

Heart disease, they said. Heart disease !
My darling !

I got strong again slowly — a most annoying thing for an active man, and I could not believe in my own weakness.

Perhaps my nerves were overstrung and my perceptions unreliable, one night, when I had in a sort of bravado walked much farther than I was really able. What am I saying ? Overstrung nerves ! Nonsense ! I saw them.

I was passing an old ruin—Saint Anne's Chapel we called it. It was gaunt and uncanny in the winter moonlight, which shone with an unearthly sort of radiance over everything. Suddenly I saw, clear and bright, in front of the falling, ruined window, two figures — figures I felt I knew. With a sudden impulse I went back into the shadow and watched. All at once I knew. The tall, slender, black-robed woman was Annora Masters. Even at that distance I could see the light in those awful eyes.

The other, a man whose attitude somehow seemed to me to show reluctance in every line, upright and firm though he stood, was—Lucy's husband. Lucy's husband ! I cast every thought of eaves-dropping to the winds—was I not, after all, on the King's highway ?—and listened.

"You will," Annora said. "You do ; I knew you before this — this ridiculously short life." And she laughed more weirdly than words can say.

"I—Lucy—was my wife, my love. I love her still," he answered, in an odd, choked voice.

"You love—me !" the cold, calm, incisive voice answered.

And I saw it. But when I think of it, after all these years, the same shudder comes over me that I felt then. Then she looked at him. He took her into his arms—the arms that had held Lucy.

I could bear no more. I never knew how I got home. All the way the thought followed, accompanied, haunted me. What was this ? Who was this who threw everything aside in this awful way, and went straight to her own ends ? Was it a woman—or a fiend ?

No one ever knew more than this. How should they ?

A room at the back of the red-brick house, in which Annora often sat, was found one morning locked from the inside. The servants were alarmed. Doubly

so, when they found that their mistress's own room had never been entered that night.

They sent for help to force the door, and found, in an arm-chair close to the window, Lucy's husband—dead—shot through the head. A pistol lay on the floor. From its position it must have fallen from his own right hand, which hung over the chair.

He was alone ; the window was shut, but not fastened, and there was no sign or trace of Annora.

A small crumpled note lay on the floor. It was in his writing, and contained very few lines.

"I am writing this at home," it ran, "to tell you I cannot come ; but what use is it ? I know I shall come as surely as ten o'clock strikes. You will make me. But—marry you ! I would kill myself first."

Annora no one ever saw again ; still, three years ago, one evening, late, in the winter moonlight, on his grave—we buried him by Lucy—I, coming home, saw a woman's figure lying. I went up to it hastily, and found what had been Annora.

JACQUES BONHOMME :

THE BOY.

"BORN in the garret, in the kitchen bred"—Byron's beginning of his bitter biography of his Lady's maid and confidante—would by no means suit my present hero, for the very good reason that his father's cottage—I might say his paternal "manoir"—has neither kitchen nor garret, properly speaking. It is a low, no-storied habitation—so low indeed that it can hardly be called an erection—with something of the compendiousness of the cobbler's stall, which served him for parlour and kitchen and all.

Whatever enlargement it may be able to make, in whatever direction it may be tempted to extend itself when times are prosperous—which has not happened of late—it is to the right or the left, before or behind ; but never upwards. France can thus exhibit the two extremes of altitude in buildings—the Eiffel Tower and the peasant's home.

Born on the ground floor, in the country bred, little Jacques, like young colts, has all his troubles before him. Often and often, he eats his brown bread long before he tastes his white. A few days after his

entrance into the world, he is taken to church by the midwife—if disengaged—for baptism, under the sponsorship of his godfather and godmother—one only of each, frequently quite children. His parents, though too hardworking to have much time to spare for devotion, still make it a point of honour and respectability to have all ceremonies of their Holy Mother the Church duly performed upon their offspring. Indeed, the less friendly they are with the Curé, the more they insist on every ecclesiastical rite being administered at the proper age and season.

But, in rural districts, it is an exception to the rule if the relations between the clergy and their parishioners are different to what they should be. When the case is otherwise, and the fault lies on the side of the priest—want of tact, or temper, or other personal disqualification—he is frequently removed by the Bishop to another cure, where he is given the opportunity of making himself more acceptable.

If Jacques were a girl, instead of being a boy, the next thing after his baptism, and as soon as he could run alone, would be the piercing of his ears and the insertion of a pair of earrings. But earrings for men, once generally worn amongst the peasantry, are not the mode at the present day, although rare instances, in out-of-the-way corners, may still be seen here and there amongst elderly people. Some of those masculine ornaments deserve a place as national curiosities in ethnological museums.

Lucky for Jacques is it if he has a sister just a little bit older than himself, who can carry him about on her back or drag him along in a wheelless box, representing a cart, in the intervals when he is not rolling on the grass or playing in the dust before the door. While his mother is at work in the fields, if she do not confide him to a neighbour's care, she may take him with her and set him down, within sight, on a bunch of dry weeds or a wisp of straw, covered with her jacket or her apron, to amuse himself as best he may with sticks and stones for his rustic playthings, or go to sleep.

He grows and thrives rapidly all the while. It is the pure air and the simple food—bread, buttermilk, and soup (bearing no resemblance to mock turtle or oxtail)—which do it. His stomach is not clogged and cloyed every day with cakes and lollipops. Perhaps his parents have a goat,

which gives him another playfellow and his share of her milk. When a little stronger, he has the additional fun of gathering green twigs, leaves, and grass for his horned friend's supper, when her tether is unfastened and she is led home to her little stable for the night.

In this way, good little Jacques is not brought, but brings himself, up. If he escapes the accidents to which his fellow-children are liable—does not set his clothes on fire, nor tumble into a wash-tub full of boiling water, nor pitch head first into the muddy ditch on the other side of the road, nor get crushed while trying to hang on behind a fast-trotting cart—he goes to school in due time, now that there are schools in sufficient plenty. In quite recent times, he would have been made to work as soon as he could handle a spade or push a wheelbarrow. And he does work now, when not pursuing his studies.

The past generation in France possessed no School Board ladies who consider what they erroneously call "education" to be the one thing needful, and hold any kind of employment, though productive of board, lodging, and clothes, to be quite a secondary consideration. I was once well acquainted with a man whose book-learning was limited to a knowledge of the Arabic numerals, which he could rudely imitate in a style corresponding to the ugly faces chalked by urchins on a wall. The rest of his calculations had to be performed by mental arithmetic. He knew how to count his money all the same. And, poor fellow, it was not his fault. One day—for one day only—he took it into his head to go to school, without asking permission at home. His father, a small peasant proprietor, gave him such a beating, for leaving his work and idling away his time with the "instituteur," that he never committed the like offence again.

But it is a mistake to suppose that people who can neither read nor write—at present rather rare birds in England—should, necessarily, be either ignorant or unintelligent. Perhaps, the absence of those keys to knowledge sharpens their observant faculties. In the Middle Ages, at any rate, people who possessed neither spelling books nor round-hand copies, were still capable of making history. Book-learning, in its way most excellent, is of little practical use, unless it is supported and backed up by higher qualities, and is

made applicable to the learner's intended course of life.

Jacques Bonhomme, although illiterate, is by no means a fool, especially respecting whatever may concern his own interest. He can make a bargain with any one. He knows how to say neither "Yes" nor "No," until he discovers which way the wind is blowing. He is "raisonneur," fond of argument, discussing a question in all its aspects. If he cannot read himself, he enjoys being read to by others, and is still more pleased when the accomplishment is displayed by one of his own rising lads or lasses.

It is more than likely that young Jacques is one of, for France, a large family of children, coming, in a series of brothers and sisters, regularly graduated before and after him, especially if his parents have nothing to leave, except their good name and their furniture, behind them. They are not over anxious on that account, believing in the popular axiom, that the hen who scratches the ground for six chickens, can scratch for seven. When the amount of the inheritance is a vanishing quantity, the number of inheritors is a matter of indifference.

The case is not the same with parents who have more or less property to be divided after their decease. Two is their normal number of children, a boy and a girl, and not a single one more. Indeed, not a few French married couples are perfectly content to have an only child to whom their combined possessions will eventually go. And not a few French children are quite satisfied to remain only children, sure to receive, all for themselves, the total amount of their father's and mother's leavings.

An only child was once strolling through a fair within whistling distance of his very well-off parents. For so healthy a lad, he had a solitary look; so I said to him, expecting sympathetic agreement:

"But don't you wish you had a nice little brother, to come with you to look at all these toys and trinkets, or a pretty little sister to take by the hand and show her the way through the bustling crowd?"

"Ah, no, no!" he answered, indignantly, as if the mere supposition of a rival were an injury to his vested rights. "No, no! I don't want that. I had much rather be as I am."

The son of a farm labourer, whether proprietor or not, learns his future occu-

pation by seeing what is done around him, and by helping occasionally. He serves a true apprenticeship, which is better than any course of technical lectures. He unconsciously imbibes traditional experience of the relations between soils and crops, situations and seasons, meadows and milk. He acquires without effort the round and course of local cultures; and, what is better, he remembers the lessons. If, by-and-by, he is capable of receiving the instruction provided for special branches of the management of land, such as forestry, vine-growing, and so on, so much the better; but a French peasant is apt to look on innovations of his established routine much as a grandmother regards the grandchild who thinks he can teach her to suck eggs. And there is reason in the prejudice, when it goes no further than caution, and is not too obstinately persisted in. Have we not, at home, persons claiming authority to recommend, in printed leaflets, the conversion of Scotch deer-forests into small, productive fruit-farms, which shall enable their occupants to earn a good living?

Proud is young Jacques if allowed to ride a horse to water, or to drive home an empty cart; curious is it to see the big, good-natured animal submit to be led by such a pretentious mite of a master. Yes, the colossal horse consents to obey the little boy, whose arm can hardly reach the bridle.

But we seldom appreciate the virtues of the farm-horse at their real value; such a good creature, so patient, so obedient, so glad to secure his owner's affections, so slow to revenge any ill-treatment he may suffer. He knows his work as well as his driver; he cares nothing about showing off his airs and graces, after the manner of his conceited brethren in town, and is only anxious to do his duty. He soon tires of standing idle in the stable, and had rather play at working, taking his walks abroad, harnessed to a team where his help is superfluous, than remain doing nothing at home. A very slight reward or mark of approbation wins his honest heart. A piece of bread, or a lump of sugar, kindly given, makes him your personal friend. He takes a natural interest in human as well as in equine affairs; else, why should he come and look over the gate of his pasture, as soon as his first appetite is satisfied, to watch what is passing along the road, what sort of vehicles are there, and which of his friends is dragging them?

I have an elderly horse, courageous yet gentle, who is afraid of nothing except of being left alone in a strange stable, or in a wood. In the latter case, when unharnessed in the midst of the trees, he browses quietly and contentedly enough, casting an inquisitive glance at us now and then, so long as any one remains in sight. But, the moment all of us disappear amongst the brushwood, he is seized with terror so invincible that it would take a strong rope to keep him from breaking loose and running wildly in search of his biped protectors. What is the cause of those groundless fears? Can it be some ancestral reminiscence of wolves and bears, or other prehistoric enemies? I wish he were able to speak in articulate language, for I am sure he would tell me if he could.

The human mite, little Jacques Bonhomme, has, nevertheless, a due sense of his own proper dignity. If he can put on a pair of leather gaiters long enough to reach up to his hips, he thinks they give him the look of a man. Although not sturdy enough to grasp the immense wooden sphere which serves as a bowl in the village game of skittles, he scorns the battledore and shuttlecock with which his neighbours' daughters disport themselves in Lent. His great delight is to borrow a long cartwhip, and practise with it until he can make the lash sound with a crack as loud as a pistol-shot.

In this way, years glide on, until the next eventful crisis of his life arrives. At twelve years of age he prepares for and receives his First Communion. His parents, whatever their private beliefs, would deem themselves, and him, dishonoured for ever, were the rite not properly met and gone through with. So he qualifies for it worthily by attending church at stated extra days and hours, by strict abstinence from meat on Fridays and fast days, and by being taught a catechism, the learning of which by rote would be thought by some of us equivalent to a sentence of several weeks' or months' hard labour. Auricular confession to the Curé is also an indispensable preliminary duty.

When the grand day at last arrives, however straitened his parents may be, they contrive, by pinching, begging, or borrowing, to array him in the prescribed costume. In black coat and trousers, white waistcoat and cravat, and a white silk écharpe or tasseled ribbon scarf tied round

his left arm, he betakes himself to church at six in the morning, fasting, and there receives his Première Communion. After breakfast, to church again; after dinner, again to church for vespers.

This is the first time of his wearing a scarf, which is one of France's official insignia. If Jacques rises to be Maire of his village, he will have to gird himself with his tricoloured sash before performing the ceremony of civil marriages; should he become police-agent in a city, it is the scarf tied round his waist which gives him authority to disperse a riotous audience who are making a disturbance in a theatre.

When possible, and his means allow, on the occasion of his First Communion, young Jacques presents his Curé with an elaborately-moulded or carved wax candle, the thicker and the longer the better. What the Curé does with all his taper-offerings is best known to the wax-chandler and himself. Of course there is a little treat at home, of cake and coffee and other rural dainties.

At the end of a twelvemonth, Jacques once more puts on the same dress, and renews his adhesion to the Church of his forefathers; after which he has nothing to do but to work, eat barrels of soup and mountains of bread, and grow into a strapping young fellow worthy to draw lots for the Conscription and take his turn at soldiering.

WITH COMPOUND INTEREST.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

By LUCIE WALKER.

CHAPTER III.

BUT when Mr. Armitage, after a leisurely journey, reached home, he found Felix in a mood quite the reverse of resigned to his fate, and Mrs. Armitage still less inclined to accept matters as her liege lord had arranged them.

"The house is almost unbearable without Ursula," she complained bitterly. "I cannot reconcile myself to the loss of the child. Each day I feel it more keenly."

"My dear," remonstrated Mr. Armitage, "I have always looked upon you as an admirably strong-minded personage, and as a mother the reverse of selfish; and here I find you lapsing into useless sentiment, just as the weakest of your sex might do,

and showing at the same time an utter disregard of Ursula's real interests."

"I won't defend the weakness of my heart," replied Mrs. Armitage, a little contemptuously. "People who have no hearts themselves are apt to judge sentiment wrongly; but what I do want you to understand is this—that I do not consider you have acted for Ursula's advantage. She is frittering away a permanent good for a little superficial and temporary profit, and what is considerably worse, she is behaving very heartlessly to Felix."

"To Felix!" repeated Mr. Armitage, incredulously. "Why, my dear Nan, you do not mean to say you consider Felix wronged because that childish nonsense of three years ago has been suffered to die a natural death?"

"It was not nonsense on Felix's part," rejoined Mrs. Armitage, warmly. "He was in deep earnest; he behaved very honourably in the matter, too, and I cannot bear to think that the only result for him will be suffering and bitterness. Ursula——"

"Now, Nan," interrupted Mr. Armitage, "do not blame Ursula. If she has outgrown her fancy for Felix I must candidly confess I am glad to hear it. I may be a bit of a Bohemian; but I still have enough backbone of family pride left to refuse to give my only daughter to the son of Felix Martin's father, whom I think I may truthfully call one of the most finished scamps it was ever my privilege to foregather with."

"And is that Felix's fault?"

"No, my dear, it is not his fault; but it is his irremediable misfortune. I have the honour to know that you do not hold my opinion in any very great esteem; but you cannot gainsay the truth of the saying, 'The sins of the fathers,' etc. Of course, Felix is a good lad himself. You have brought him up carefully; that, however, does not clear up the cloud of mystery and disreputableness which clings about his origin. Why could not Martin, when he knew he was on his death-bed, have given some clue to his belongings instead of leaving his child penniless on promiscuous charity?"

"I know," rejoined Mrs. Armitage, "that you have never ceased to upbraid him with what was perhaps an unintentional omission at the last."

"He should not have left the matter to the last. He was ready enough during the time our acquaintance with him lasted, to

make all sorts of confidences to you. You know we had to leave Homburg because his openly-paraded devotion to you placed me in such a ridiculous position. Mind, I did not blame you; you know I never suspected that you encouraged his folly; but I have no doubt others were less charitable when, stricken down by fever, he telegraphed for you, and you hastened back to him, stood by his death-bed, and accepted his charge to burden yourself with his delicate pauper child. Indeed, Nan, easy-going husband as I am, I do not think any one can be surprised that I did not open my arms to the boy."

Mrs. Armitage smiled. It was no new thing to her to hear this story repeated, to hear her husband sum up the evidence in favour of his dislike to Felix.

"Now you had better go on," she said, "and try to recall all that my adopted son has done for me: his patient, self-denying life, his unwearying kindness; and, perhaps, at the end we may conclude that the little pauper whose father left him friendless in a foreign hotel is our creditor and not our debtor. Moreover," she continued, changing her tone, "I am morally certain that it is by your carefully-directed influence, from your continued hints and innuendoes, that Ursula—who looks up to you as her model—has turned with contempt from the honestest love which will ever be offered to her, and taken back the love which she herself once gave so freely; when I think of this, I wonder you can say that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children, without feeling that where you have sown she will some day reap."

"Oho!" cried Mr. Armitage; "my paternal prudence is a capital crime, is it? Well, Nan, if your weakness for Felix so far blinds you, I must forgive you, I suppose; but please understand me when I say that the final word concerning Ursula's future will be said by me, and that final word will never—mind, never—be in favour of your adopted son."

In the meantime, Ursula, quite unaware of these stormy discussions respecting her future, was leaving her past behind her with a rapidity at which she herself was astonished. Already across the great gulf which separated her from it, her former life looked dim and strange. There had been a day, she knew—a long series of days—when she had practised crabbed music with diligent, weary fingers, in a dingy room, when her highest hope had

been to emerge from the chrysalis state of study into a well-instructed musician. But those days were over now; she scarcely regretted them. Sometimes, even, she reviewed them in comparison with her present, and felt a sense of relief. In the new atmosphere to which she had so quickly become acclimatised, she felt herself to be a new person. Something of this she said one day to Monsieur di Loscagno; for one of the pleasantest novelties of her actual life was Monsieur di Loscagno's ready sympathy for whatever she was pleased to say to him whenever occasion offered. The present occasion was favourable to friendly confidences. It was evening, and the light of the sunset was fading behind the long slopes of the Paradis; the last violets and the first orange-blossoms were pouring out their scent through the garden where René had joined Ursula.

"And why should you not be a new person?" he answered. "If your Shakespeare is right in saying: 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players,' why should you not be a different person herefrom anything you have ever been before? The accessories, the environment, as the philosophers say, have all changed. You adapt yourself to circumstances. That is all very good and natural, so long as you do not wish you were playing the old part on the former stage." And then Monsieur di Loscagno stopped in his walk and his talk, and looked into Ursula's eyes; a proceeding which translated any answer she might have been prepared to give into the somewhat ambiguous form of a soft blush and a tremulous motion of the lips. "Tell me," he continued, "if feeling that you are a new person makes you at all unhappy?"

"Unhappy!" repeated Ursula. "Do I not look as if I were happy?"

"You look all that is charming and sweet; but I want to hear you say what you feel. No, we won't turn back; let us go a little way up the hill, and then you can tell me if you are really happy here."

"I am very happy," replied Ursula, softly.

"But you were happy, also, before you came to us, so I don't think that confession is full enough. Will you not say that you are happier here than you have ever been? Don't you see, my child, I am jealous, jealous of those old days when I did not know you. I should like to do away with

them; I want here and now to be all that you care about—all your world."

She did not answer. They had wandered upwards along one of the terraced walks on the hill-side to a point where a group of tamarisks closed them round. She looked up and saw the tender tracery of the young shoots against the transparent opal of the sky; the great white moths flashed out of the deeper shadows across the gleams of light; from the far-off shore came up the murmur of the heaving sea and the song of some homeward-bound peasants. She gazed all round her—she wanted to see how the world looked in the great moment which she felt had come upon her.

"Ursula," he continued—it was the first time he had called her by her name—"Ursula, I dare not tell you all I want to tell, because you will not answer me or look at me."

Then she turned towards him.

"What can I say?" she whispered, tremulously. "I cannot find words to say all that is in my heart."

"Cannot!" he cried, passionately. "Ah, child, you can if you try. It is not enough for me to have a half confession. My love, my heart of hearts, I will not let you go until you have told me you love me—until you have heard all my love for you. No, no, perhaps not all, that would be too long. It will take me many days to tell you all my love for you."

"It would take me," replied Ursula, letting him clasp her hands and draw her close to him, "it would take me more than many days to tell the whole of my love for you. It would take me all my life."

"Tant mieux," said Monsieur di Loscagno, "our tête-à-têtes will never be dull at that rate."

"Ursula, Ursula, where have you hidden yourself? Didn't you hear the dressing-bell? It rang five minutes ago. Jean Baptiste told me you had not come in." It was the Baroness's voice, followed by the Baroness herself, which abruptly closed the scene. "I thought I saw your white shawl going up the hill; and did I not hear my nephew's voice?"

"You did, Madame," said Ursula, as quietly as she could. "Monsieur di Loscagno has this moment gone towards the house."

For René, at the first sound of his aunt's voice, had pressed a kiss on Ursula's forehead, and taken his way rapidly through the trees downhill.

"We need not," he said to Ursula afterwards, "take the whole world into the secret we have scarcely told to one another. For many reasons it would be the height of imprudence to speak of the matter to my aunt. You have already had several opportunities of seeing that she and I are not always unanimous in our opinions. We cannot risk our happiness by placing her in the opposition. Do you think you understand me, my darling?"

Ursula was not sure that she did understand; but she assented. If René wished this beautiful idyll of their love to be read by no unsympathising eyes, she, for her part, was glad that it should be so. The Baroness was very kind to her; perhaps deserved her confidence; but this was a delicate matter, which did not concern herself alone; she could not do better than resign her judgement into the hands of the man who had realised for her her standard of a lover who knew how to love.

Meanwhile, the occasions on which she could see Monsieur di Loscagno "under four eyes," were few and short. The Baroness paid a proper allegiance to that hydra-headed tyrant "*les convenances*," who multiplies and magnifies the office of Mrs. Grundy in every stratum of French society. Perhaps she had a suspicion that some watchfulness was needed.

"My nephew is paying me an unusually long visit this year," she said more than once to Ursula, as the spring wore on. "I do not think he can possibly stay beyond *Mi-carême*." Then later, with increasing wonder, her exclamation was: "To all appearance, Monsieur di Loscagno intends to remain with me until after Easter. *Tant mieux*, for I fear that he lives rather a '*vie de Polichinelle*,' at Paris. Perhaps I may even prevail upon him to stay for my fête, which he has not done for years. He always pleads engagements just then; but I know he laughs in his sleeve at the rustic festival we get up in honour of an old woman's growing older."

And as Easter came and went and found Monsieur di Loscagno still at the Villa Estella, Ursula's heart beat more and more wildly with joy at the thought of what it was which kept him a willing guest where he was usually as restless and migratory as a bird of passage.

Madame di Loscagno's birthday fell early in May, when the flowers were in their full glory, and before the transient verdure of the

Provençal summer had perished beneath the Provençal sun and the Provençal dust. It had become, after five-and-twenty years of observance, as marked a day in the local calendar as any of the holidays of the Church. Regularly as it came round invitations were sent out far and near; the villa was turned inside out and upside down with the bustle of multifarious preparations; the garden was decorated with flags, coloured lamps, and Chinese lanterns. A great tent was erected under the trees, in which all the peasants of the neighbourhood were regaled with good things, as a prelude to the rest of the entertainment.

But if Monsieur di Loscagno was going to condescend to grace this festival with his presence, he took care to inform Ursula duly of the esteem in which he held it.

"I am staying," he said, "simply and solely because I cannot tear myself away; because you have bewitched me and made me forget all that I ever cared about before. The fête itself is the dullest of things. The whole place looks like some fourth-rate provincial town on the fourteenth of July. There is a dull dinner, followed by a ball in the evening for the provincial dignitaries, who can neither converse nor dance. Now if I face all this for your sweet sake, will you have pity on me on that miserable evening, and walk with me every time I ask you?"

Ursula looked at him with a glad light in her eyes. She was never weary of hearing the story of her lover's devotion to her.

"I would dance every dance with you if I might," she said; "but Madame would not allow it. Do you know, dearest, I sometimes fancy she watches me a little, and then I long to tell her plainly how matters stand between us."

"My sweet child," exclaimed Monsieur di Loscagno, "you must on no account give way to such a rash impulse. Have I not shown you how cautiously we must act in the matter? I can only assure you that if my aunt knew all, our halcyon days would be surely and certainly over."

"Then," replied Ursula, with a half-pout, "it will be better for us not to dance together at the ball; and you would be wiser not to come and walk with me any more along the beach."

"Ah! are you a tiny bit vexed with me? That's right. You are never so sweet as when you forgive me, which you always finish by doing. As to the waltzes, we will settle that when the day comes."

But when the day did come, the matter

of the waltzes—which was very prominent in Ursula's thoughts—did not seem to recur to Monsieur di Loscagno as he sat smoking on the terrace, and looking on at the preparations with the air of being decidedly out of tune for a fête. The weather was not very propitious either. After days of unshadowed sunshine, heavy clouds had that morning begun to gather out to sea, and to show signs of appearing as unwelcome intruders over the festival.

"Something has broken the spell of my good fortune," said the Baroness. "Till this year the perfect weather on the tenth of May has been proverbial."

"And how much longer shall you be engaged in this bustle of preparation?" Monsieur di Loscagno asked Ursula, as she passed along the terrace for at least the fiftieth time that morning.

"Are you tired of it already?" she asked, laughing. "I was just coming to ask you to gather me some more roses from the trellis. Will you not come?"

"I will come anywhere you bid me, but I am in the worst of humours."

"Because of all these preparations?"

"No, no; that is a mere trifle. There, never mind the roses, come for a few quiet steps with me. This may be our last opportunity of saying good-bye without an audience."

"Of saying good-bye!" exclaimed Ursula. "Réné, are you going?"

"I am obliged to go, dearest; it is no choice of mine. I want to make you understand it all—to take you completely into my confidence."

Ursula's heart thrilled with an unknown pain.

"Go on," she said, "you know I care to hear whatever you care to tell me."

"Yes, yes," he replied, drawing closer to her, and taking her hands. "Your friendship, your love, is the only sweet thing in my life. Ursula, when I tell you that I am at this moment a really unhappy man, you must not doubt me. I cannot explain to you better what I mean than by showing you the letters which this morning's post has brought me, like malignant fairies among the mass of congratulations with which the post-bag was crammed. See, here is one from your father, relative to our marble quarry scheme. For this long-delayed letter I have waited eagerly; it brings me a bitter disappointment. The company is no nearer being 'floated,' as he calls it, than it was three months ago. And your father is starting next week for

America to look at a silver mine somewhere or other. Another false hope for some one, I suppose."

"I am very sorry," said Ursula, deprecatingly. "I don't understand these things; but if people will not buy marble quarry shares, father cannot compel them to do so."

"I am not blaming him for what he cannot do, I am blaming myself for wasting my time in building upon sand."

"But does the failure of the marble quarry distress you so much—if, indeed, it can be said to have failed when father only says that it does not take at present?"

"It does distress me," he replied, querulously. "I shouldn't have gone into the matter if its success had not been important to me; and time present, my dearest child, is in reality the only time, so present failure cannot well be compensated by hope deferred. Moreover, here are one or two other communications which you may see."

"Bills!" said Ursula.

"Yes, bills—ugly, prosaic, long-standing, importunate bills, which utterly refuse to wait any longer."

"And cannot you pay them?"

Monsieur di Loscagno shrugged his shoulders. "If I could pay them, where would be my grounds for wailing over them? No, my dear, I cannot pay them, though I have been frequently reminded that their nonpayment will entail the most unpleasant consequences."

"Had you not better speak to Madame?"

"Speak to Madame? About what? About these bills? Not I. My dear child, if she paid every sou of these—which she wouldn't do—it would be but a drop in the ocean; and I should still be a man with an income utterly disproportioned to his wants."

Ursula's heart sank within her. How soon would the blow from this sword of Damocles fall on the doomed head of her lover?

"Oh, Réné," she cried, "what can be done? Cannot you think of anything?"

"I can," he replied, grimly, "though the remedy is scarcely better than the disease; it entails our saying good-bye."

"Well," replied Ursula, cheerfully, though she felt very sick at heart, "we will say good-bye, and wait for better days, will we not? It will pull right somehow."

"Ursula," he went on softly, unheeding

her suggestion, "we have been very happy. It is not often that two people taste such perfect happiness."

"Is it not?" replied the girl. "I should have thought all people who love one another are as happy some time or other as we have been."

"But love is apt to bring trouble as well as joy, dearest. Hitherto ours has been all joy; the trouble is that it cannot, as I wish it could, last for ever."

"Réné," cried Ursula, "what do you mean? Have you left off caring for me?"

"No, my darling," he answered, gravely, "I have not; perhaps I never shall. But you see how things are for me. Do not blame me; no man can struggle against the inevitable. I have still another letter to show you. This will tell you the rest better than I can."

And Ursula read through tears which she would not suffer to fall:

"MY DEAR RENÉ,—I am sorry to learn from your last letter that your position is getting so much more difficult, and that your aunt is still as inflexible as ever in the matter of smoothing those difficulties. Allow me to remark that you recklessly refused a good chance of recovering your financial equilibrium last autumn, when you did not respond to the advances of Monsieur Jasmir Meilhan, on behalf of his daughter. My dear fellow, picture to yourself the liberality with which the Lyons silk-spinner would dower Mademoiselle Meilhan if she emerged from the parental cocoon as Madame a Baronne. Will you not reconsider your refusal to enter the bonds of Hymen with his prize? I know for a certainty that your former hesitation has not blasted your prospects of final success. Father and laughter are still open to offers. A word from me would suffice. Come to me without delay, if you see wisdom in my plan. —Yours, LEON DE CASTERAN."

Ursula read this letter twice slowly, and without comment. Then she looked up.

"And you are going at once," she said; "you do see wisdom in the plan?"

She spoke so calmly that her companion was puzzled. He had expected a scene—ears at the least; and she had swallowed down the first appearance of them. If he had known she would have minded so little, he would—he thought—have made

a less elaborate preamble, or even have left her to hear the news from his aunt.

"My dear child," he said, "I am so thankful you see it in that light. You are an angel. Ah!" he went on, taking her cold hands, "why are not you the well-dowered one? Perhaps we have been foolish; perhaps I have done wrong."

"Perhaps!" repeated Ursula, drawing away her hands; "why do you say perhaps?" Then she turned away. "Ah, Madame was right," she said. "The thunderstorm will be over before lunch. I must go and get the roses quickly. Do not come with me. I had rather be alone."

So she went and left him. Her sweet idyll was over, lost in a passion of pain so keen that she wondered if she should outlive it. Her troubadour was false; he had charmed her heart away for an idle pastime. The roses on the trellis hung their heads languidly to the coming storm; the orange-blossoms loaded the air with heavy fragrance. She let them stay where they were. Forgetting why she had come into the flower-garden, she sat down beside a low parapet, leaned her head on her folded arms, and gave herself up to the first gust of the tempest within her. Of the tempest above she took no heed. She did not hear the low, angry muttering of the thunder, nor feel the plash of the first great heavy raindrops. Once when a mighty crash re-echoed above her, and nearly stunned her, there shot through her bewildered mind the thought, almost the wish, that the next bolt might fall on her aching head, and end her sorrow and bring her forgetfulness.

A couple of hours afterwards, when the sun had begun actively to dry the dripping trees on which the flags and Chinese lanterns hung in tattered shreds, one of the gardeners hurrying round on his way to restore such order as was possible to the outraged decoration, found Ursula still lying where she had thrown herself beside the parapet.

"Mon Dieu!" he cried, "where will the disasters end this day? First such a flood of rain as we have not seen these ten years, and then the pretty little English demoiselle struck by a coup de tonnerre. It is as if Monsieur le Baron had cast the evil eye on the fête, with his unwonted presence."

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

BOOK THREE.

TOLD BY THE AUTHOR.

CHAPTER I.

"A BOLT FROM THE BLUE."

"ONCE upon a time"—a long while ago now, yet in a time all unforgotten, on a certain summer night, soft and beautiful, three persons sat out on a low terrace overlooking the Bay of Kinsale.

Between them and the soft shimmer of the bay was a veil of trees, through whose gently-stirring, interlacing branches the calm sheet of silver shone like a mirror. Not a stir was on its breast; not a ripple broke its exquisite and perfect rest. It lay as though entranced beneath the flood of light poured upon its placid face by the amber moon above. The sky, no longer blue, as in the glorious day which had ushered in this beauteous night, but of a rich and delicate purple, seemed to bring the stars marvellously near the earth, so pure a setting did it make for them to shine in.

The little black-cap—tiniest of night's songsters—warbled and twittered in a tree hard by, singing so softly that it might have been singing in its sleep, or trying to woo some of its fellows to rest. Now and again the cushats in the branches overhead stirred with faint rustlings of feathers, and half-fretful coo-oo.

Once was heard the soft, regular plash of oars in the distance; then this died away, like the ceasing of a pulse that beats

fainter, and fainter, and so dies. Again came the far-away tinkle of fitful music from the barracks high on the hill—some soldier thrumming a plaintive nigger melody to delight his comrades.

But this, too, died, and the "hush of the star-shine" lay all around and about; and the beauty of the silver moonlight, and the sleeping water, the perfection of the great, beautiful silence spoke to the hearts of those who watched, so that their voices were hushed and their words were few.

Two of the three wore the mess uniform of a line regiment, and the scarlet and gold gleamed bright in the glimmering light. With forage-caps pushed far back, and the grey-blue smoke of cigarettes curling up into the moonlight, they lounged in glorious idleness upon the soft green turf. The third—a woman—all in grey, stood leaning her arms on the low stone wall that edged the terrace; her dress trailing on the dark velvet moss which carpeted the pavement at her feet.

"You look like a ghost standing there," said one of the men, dropping his forage-cap on to the grass and passing his fingers lazily through his crisp, short curls of bronze.

"Or a banshee," put in the other. "This is just the night for a banshee to 'keen,' don't you know?"

"I had rather look like a banshee, or even a ghost, such a night as this, than like a mere mortal," replied the woman in grey. "Even in Malta, I hardly remember such a one. It only wants the scent of the orange-flowers and the oleanders to make it perfect."

"The absence of mosquitoes must count for something though," said the man who had spoken first.

"Quite so," replied his fellow, blowing a ring of smoke high into the air, and settling himself still more comfortably on his grassy couch.

Then silence fell once more upon all three. The banahée stirred not from her quiet corner on the terrace, where the tall, pale lilies stood straight and slim, and the wine-coloured wall-flowers grew at distances upon the coping, making the night sweet as well as fair with their sweet breath.

"Help! help! help! for the love of God! Help!"

What terrible cry is this rending the silence of the perfect night? What wild appeal is this coming up from the placid, shining water, and dying away in inarticulate sobs and wailings? Is some one drowning in that lovely water? Is some life being choked out by that deadly, beautiful bay, so treacherously deep in places least expected?

With a shout the two men are on their feet, and, laying each a hand on the low coping, the lithe, scarlet-coated figures swing themselves down the grassy incline beyond, and, in a moment more, like a red flash, they are gone; they have passed the line of trees, they have reached the bank that never seemed so far off before.

The woman in grey, acting upon that swift and irresistible impulse which in such supreme moments leads us to appeal to heaven in wordless prayer, has dropped upon her knees upon the mossy stones, and is sobbing as she listens to the confused sounds that rise from the bank where figures, strange and misty, can be seen hurrying to and fro.

This small "story within a story" ends happily.

The heedless boy, wandering along the margin of the bay—the margin that winter floods had worn and caved as surely as though spade and pickaxe had been long at work—felt the ground beneath his feet give way—felt the cold flood grappling with him—clutched madly at the grass and flowers; but all in vain, had sunk struggling, had risen again, and had uttered that wild cry which brought the help so sorely needed.

"Is he safe?" cried the woman in grey, as the scarlet jackets were seen coming leisurely up the grassy hill, and the scratch of a vesuvian made itself heard.

"Safe enough," said one; "but he fell in at a nasty place. We had him out in a jiffy; and all his family are gathered

about him now crying 'warra-warra' over him, and they've sent for the priest to bless him."

But there was not a smile left in the woman in grey.

"I shall never forget," she said, putting her hand over her eyes, "the beauty and the stillness; and then—that awful cry."

The men were grave at this, too; and the three looked at each other, standing there in the pale moonlight, with the bay, bright, beautiful, and innocent-looking as before.

"In the midst of life we are in death."

That was the thought which ran through the mind of the woman as she turned away and walked slowly from the terrace, her long dress brushing the little trefolls in the crevices and the tall spears of the mosses as she passed.

The night was as fair, the air as soft and balmy, the water as like a mirror of steel, showing bravely through the interlacing branches, as before that bitter cry had rent the sacred silence.

But to her there lurked something of treachery in the quiet depths of the moon-kissed, stirless water. She did not care to watch it any more.

These things happened long ago.

The two who answered to that cry for help, just as they would have led a forlorn hope, or braved the battle and the pestilence, promptly, but with the calm, unpretentious mien that becomes the true soldier, sleep soundly enough "after life's fitful fever." Only the woman in grey is left of the three who watched the silent beauty of the night, and heard its silence torn in one swift moment by that bitter cry; but she has not forgotten.

"It was like some one very glad, very happy—lapped in peace; and then some awful sorrow, quite unlooked-for, coming upon him and tearing his life apart."

That was what she said long afterwards, when some one spoke of that never-forgotten night. That is why its story has been told here—because it was "like some one very happy; and then a great sorrow coming and rending life and heart in twain."

It is night in the London streets. Above a dark and gloomy gateway a lamp burns, flickering as the wind, which is rising steadily, catches the flame and sways it. Eleven sonorous strokes have rung out the hour from the prison clock, and gone

shuddering out into the night. For many in that dark, high-walled building which flanks the street, and stretches far back in separate wings and blocks, there is no hope on earth save the passing of the time, the eternal march of the heavy-laden, leaden-footed hours, that must, in the end, lead on to liberty.

To such, surely the striking of the prison clock must be a welcome sound; for it is a voice that says: "One more hour is gone, one more tiny step is taken towards the day when those ponderous gates shall open, and you shall pass out—lonely, friendless, it may be, finding life a harder struggle than words can tell, doubtless; but yet free!"

The man or woman who, having worked out "time," takes leave of the Reverend Louis Draycott, Chaplain, and thanks him—often with stammering tongue and tear-bright eye—for all his kindness through the period of imprisonment, feels that he or she will not "lose touch" with "the Parson" because that period is over. In one way or another the kindly hand is still stretched out to help and guide. No fear that "the Parson" will forget you! If you write to him, weeks and weeks after you have, trembling with eagerness, donned the clothes lost sight of so long, or, they being past grace or mercy, those provided for you to start life anew in—he will have you as freshly in his mind as in the moment that he shook your hand so cordially, and George, the porter, let you through the wicket, out into the wide, wide world once more.

If you have any "grit" in you at all, you feel that the way the Chaplain has spoken of what you will do with this new liberty of yours, the trust he has shown in you is like having had a staff put into your toil-worn hands—it is a something to rest upon, to fall back upon in moments of temptation. You call to mind how he used to speak to you, how he used to reason with you, and how easy it seemed to him to read the thoughts of your erring heart. You girded against him at first. You tried to harden yourself against him. You resisted the longing to tell him that you bitterly repented the past, and wanted to make a better thing of the future.

But you did not keep this sort of thing up long. You could not meet those kindly, grave, pitiful eyes day after day, and resist their pleading.

A little sooner, or a little later—it was all the same in the end. The Chaplain's

persistent kindness, his intuitive understanding of the how, the why, and the wherefore of your falling into sin; his sympathy with you; his tenderness over you, broke you down. Day by day, in your thoughts of both, the past grew blacker, the future brighter.

When your "time" was worked out, and you left the prison to face the world anew, the hand that had held yours so long, did not let you go. If you stumbled, it upheld you. If you were ready to stray, it guided you. And to those whose only release from captivity was through the dark gate of death, the prison Chaplain was still the same unfailing friend and guide.

"He tames 'em, same as those chaps yo' hear tell of tames the wild beasts and beastesses, by the power o' love and kindness; they be constrained, like, as the Scriptur' has it—all but the reg'lar bad 'uns; and sakes! how he do fret over them! Why, we could tell if we lived outside, and never got a glink into a cell, if there wur a 'bad case' on hand, that we could, by Mr. Draycot's face—so sad and sorrowful like. They be hard hearts that stand the look on't, Mrs. Mogeridge."

So spake a warder to the widow of the man who had been hanged in the dawn of the year's last day.

And Bessy, with little Bobby as usual hanging on to her gown, listened eagerly, while the tears started to her eyes so that she had to wipe them away with the corner of her apron.

Bessy worked regularly in the prison now, her skill as a quick and clever laundress making her services valuable. And as to Bobby, he was rapidly becoming a sort of privileged person, allowed to wander about at his own sweet will; peeping into old David Bramble's room, and taking such liberties with that dignified animal, Joseph Stubbs, as never mortal had been known to take before.

To return from this long digression. As the hour before midnight clangs out from the prison clock, here and there, far and near, from city spire and tower, comes the echo of other chimings, till the night seems to vibrate and beat like a pulse, with wave upon wave of sound.

It is a shocking hour for Bobby to be still out of bed; but all the same, here he is, trying to efface himself in his mother's gown, as the Chaplain, followed by the Lady Superintendent and a wardress, comes down the central corridor leading to the women's cells. We have a good chance

now to sketch Louis Draycott, as he comes with a quiet, yet swinging stride down the long passage, where the light from the lamps above falls full upon him.

He is very tall and somewhat gaunt in figure, yet giving you the idea of great physical strength. His face is worn, and the dark, crisp hair is somewhat grizzled on either temple. In his eyes is the light of a great peace. They are strangely attractive, these eyes of his; much the colour you may see in some mountain tarn, within whose depths is mirrored a dark-grey cloud above. They are long-lashed as a woman's, which gives them a wonderful softness; and just now are shining with what looks like the reflection of a sweet and passionate content—a something that cannot be quite laid aside or banished even by the gravity that overlays it.

For he is grave indeed, as becomes a man going to meet one of those difficult "cases" which occur so often in prison-life, and call for all the earnest, prayerful effort and all the tact and wisdom of the priest who is called upon to deal with them.

"Fetch the Chaplain," said George Bramble; "he knows how to fettle the likes of she. He'll tame her, never fear; and then the rest of us'll get some peace."

So they have sent for the Chaplain, and here he is, his soft, black felt hat in his hands; hands that are fine and slender, yet can grip like iron, or touch the bowed head or death-cold clenched fingers of the tortured sinner as tenderly as a mother handles her sick child.

A remarkable man altogether, and one whose power of sympathy is boundless, drawing even the hardest-hearted criminals to him as with silken cords.

"It is a case of stabbing, sir; on remand," says the quiet-looking Superintendent. "It is a very bad case altogether; the worst we have in this long while back."

"Destructive?" says the Chaplain.

"There isn't a whole bit of nothing left in the place," puts in the wardress, smoothing down her neat white apron with hands that tremble with passion. "I was never so sauced, sir, nor so put on, nor so made little on, since I come inside, sir—never!"

"It's all in the day's work, Nancy," replies the Chaplain, with a little smile, and a glint of humour in his eyes; "all in the day's work. The rough with the smooth, that's how we have to take it, you and I, and the rest," and the frown on the

woman's face is smoothed away, and the fire dies out of her indignant eyes.

"Yes, sir. I know it's as hard on you as on us—harder, too—and I'm a fool to fash myself like this. I'll do better with the next of 'em, see if I don't."

"Why, here's Bobby," says the Chaplain, "and Bessy stitching by this flickering light, that is sure to spoil her sight."

Bessy has risen to her feet, and dropped a curtsy, and is beseeching Bobby to make a proper bow, instead of hiding in her gown, and wrapping himself up in it like a young mummy.

"It's late for such a little man as you to be out of bed," says the Chaplain, smiling down upon the child, and laying his hand upon the curly head that peers at him from the shelter of the mother's gown.

"That it is, sir," says Bessy. "And he'd ought'er be ashamed of himself, so he ought; but he's so coary. I've just got to give in to him, the young rascal!"

Then the three pass down the corridor, the hard, metallic ring of their footsteps on the slate flooring dying away in the distance.

The cell for which they are bound lies at the extreme end of the passage, and is one set apart for unruly and violent prisoners. The furniture—if such it can be called—is even more plain and ponderous than that in the adjoining cells. Yet the present inmate has already managed to do some damage, and is evidently intent upon doing more; for, as a second wardress steps out from the shadow and opens the door, a torrent of abusive language, mingled with threats as to future enormities, and the jangle of a chain—for the woman is handcuffed—greet the ears of the Chaplain and his companions.

Louis Draycott, waving the women back, steps, with grave, determined mien, right into the middle of the cell. Then a figure—that is huddled up in one corner where fragments of torn bedding bestrew the ground—rises slowly, and he stands face to face with the "bad case" to which he has been summoned.

The prisoner is a tall, finely-formed woman, and shows still some trace of a beauty that is blotched and blurred by a life of debauchery and excess. Dark elf-locks cluster about her face, and her keen black eyes glare at the intruder defiantly, while all the time she keeps up that torrent of invective, now and again screaming at the pitch of her voice, till the shrill sounds echo down the galleries, "making night hideous."

Suddenly there is a silence and stillness, so deep, that not even a clank of the chain between her wrists is audible, as she stares wildly at the tall form in priestly garb which stands right before her.

He, too, is still and silent. They might both as well be two figures in stone, for any sign of life they give. Fear and amaze keep the others silent.

The woman moves first, shading her eyes with her fettered hands, as if the light from the lamp in the wall dazzled her. Slowly and deliberately she steps towards the Chaplain, still keeping silence. The gaze she fixes upon him seems one to sear and burn what it falls upon.

He, on his part, his lips showing white under the heavy sweep of the moustache that shades his mouth, falls back at her approach; and so, step by step, the two cross the cell, till Louis Draycott stands with his back against the wall, and his pursuer is close upon him, peering into his death-pale face.

"So they have sent for you to see—your wife!" she hisses out between her teeth. "They have done you an ill turn to-night—Louis!"

THE MILITIA.

As everything is said to come to those who know how to wait, our old national force of the Militia ought to be in the way of getting all it wants. And that "all" signifies a good deal. It wants officers first of all, who, in the official Army Lists, are represented too often by rows of asterisks. It wants men, too; efficient men, who can be counted upon to muster at the annual training. It wants organisation above all, so that in time of need it may be mobilised without delay. And, finally, it wants its own assured position in the scheme of national defence, so that officers, and rank and file, may acquire that coherence and esprit de corps which is hardly possible under present conditions.

In one way or another the Militia has incurred a good deal of undeserved neglect. It has had no influential friends at headquarters, no eloquent parliamentary advocates; nor has the force been altogether popular with those who direct the organs of public opinion. Quiet country neighbourhoods have not regarded the appearance of the Militia, for its yearly training, as an unmixed blessing; and it must

be said, that there is often a want of tone about the militiaman that discourages the warmest friends of the force. And yet, in spite of all disadvantages and discouragements, there are many excellent Militia battalions; and the force, as a whole, forms an essential portion of our means of national defence.

In its historical aspect, the Militia is, without doubt, the existing representative of the old national force, whose origin can be traced to the first beginnings of national life. It is the lineal descendant of the Anglo-Saxon fyrd—the general muster of every freeman capable of bearing arms— assembled in tythings, hundreds, and counties.

It was this English Militia which broke before the more highly-organised forces of the Norman invaders; those English billmen and spearmen whose stubborn valour long made the victory doubtful. And it seemed for a time as if the national army were destined to be altogether overriden and destroyed by the feudal chivalry of the conquerors.

But the Norman Kings soon found that it was only by mustering the array of their new subjects that they could make head against the overweening power of their great feudatories. Loyal to the stern verdict of fact, the English force mustered under the Red King, and helped to ding down the castles and disperse the forces of his enemies.

The national array was formally regulated by an Act of King Henry the Second, A.D. 1181, called an Assize of Arms, which Act was confirmed and enlarged a century later, by King Edward the First, when every man was enjoined to provide arms and armour according to his degree. Constables were to see to the arms, and to appoint proper persons to muster and train those who bore them. There were no exceptions then and no substitutes: the beardless boy of sixteen and the grizzled veteran of sixty were alike bound to appear at the county musters.

Were the Welsh carrying fire and sword among the English homesteads in the Severn valley, then the summons would fly even as far as the East Anglian corner of the land, and the men of the eastern counties would muster for the march somewhere about Newmarket Heath; although, probably, the nimble Welshmen were safe among their mountains, with their plunder, before the whole force was in motion.

Then there would be the Scotch spreading, in a devastating swarm, over the north of England; and horn would sound to horn, and the tocin sound from church tower to church tower, and beacons blaze all along the hills; and Hodge and Giles would leave the plough in the furrow, and, taking down bow and baldrick from the chimney-corner, would trudge away with stout hearts, while their womenkind sent after them cries of cheer and encouragement.

When it was a question of foreign war, the King was obliged to rely more especially upon his military feudatories. But the national force still supplied its quota; and even when changes in the art of war had called into existence a caste of professional soldiers, the English bowmen held a foremost place in the array who had mustered on village greens, and would return to homestead and cottage when the war was over, such of them as survived the shock of battle and the dread mortality of camps and bivouacs.

In the whole strangely-mingled array, in which the damascened and burnished armour and gay trappings and pennons of nobles and knights contrasted with the rude and rust-stained buff jerkin of the yeoman, there was one distinguishing mark in common: all must bear a band of Saint George—a red cross on a white ground. And, while the various bands that ranged themselves under the banner of their feudal chiefs had each their own particular battle-cry, the general host advanced with hoarse and continued shouts of "Saint George! Saint George!"

It was the Hoste, or Oste; not yet the army; and the "statutes and ordinances" for its government have come down to us from the days of Richard the Second.

There is not much in this original "Mutiny Act" to throw light upon the internal condition of the Royal Host. Its chief provisions are against those unreasoning panics which were especially to be dreaded in the case of large bodies of men brought hastily together. It was all very well to "Cry Havock, And let loose the dogs of War," but to raise such a cry in the King's host was an offence punishable with death. There must have been something especially startling and overwhelming in this particular cry, at the sound of which even the boldest warrior might lose his presence of mind, and be driven to join the general rout.

Other "unlawful scryes" might be

severely punished; but this "havock" was a terrible affair, and treasonable above all the rest.

Other articles are directed against substitutes; for it was personal service and not a mere money payment that was due from every man to his King and country. The time soon came when the commutation of personal service was made easy, and money to hire mercenaries greatly preferred to the actual presence of yeomen, franklin, or esquire.

With the Wars of the Roses the national force fell somewhat into disarray. When a general levy was called now in the name of Henry, and again in that of Edward, the common sense of the people prompted them to pay attention to neither, and the machinery of the general array grew antiquated and obsolete. Yet still a note of invasion from Scotland would bring together the flower of the nation in battle array. At Flodden, while the English King and the élite of his nobles were gasconading in France, the Militia of the kingdom, as they were in effect though not yet in name, met and overthrew the bravest array that had ever issued forth from Scotland.

The next great national emergency, the threatened Spanish invasion of Elizabeth's time, came upon the country when its array had fallen into neglect. Shakespeare gives us a picture of his own time in the arrangements of Sir John Falstaff with the levies he raises in Gloucestershire, and in the humours of Mr. Justice Shallow. But the spirit of the nation was high, and before the Armada reached our shores, much had been done to remedy past neglect. Then appeared the trained bands, portions of the national force, officered by the local gentry and trained by shrewd, ancient captains, who henceforward formed the backbone of the national defensive force.

It is in Elizabeth's reign that we first hear of the word militia applied to the general array. The word was probably brought from France, where English forces had been helping Henry of Navarre to make head against the League and the Spaniards. Under the old French monarchy, the "milice" was the levy of bourgeois and peasants made by lot, and corresponded pretty nearly with our English "general array." From that time allusions to Militia are frequent. In 1624 Buckingham writes that "the King is resolved to have his shipping in readiness, the militia in order, and certain

number of the trained bands ready at an hour's warning." But the name was still so generally unfamiliar, that in the debates on the Militia in 1641, when the Parliament was endeavouring to secure its entire control, a member observed: "I do heartily wish that this great word, this hard word, the militia, might never have come within these walls."

At the time of the Civil Wars, the establishment of the Militia, as we may now definitely term the general array, had so far been reorganised that each county had its magazine of arms and ammunition, and to secure these depôts was the first object alike of King and Parliament. As the war progressed, and the opposing forces assumed the character of permanent armies, Militia and trained bands were no more heard of. But at the Restoration, with the disbandment of Cromwell's army, the Militia again assumed importance. An Act of Parliament definitely regulated its establishment. The Lord Lieutenant of the county was created the chief authority over the whole Militia of his county, and he appointed all officers, subject to the veto of the Crown. An attempt was made, also, to revive something of the old feudal service long since sunk into desuetude, in subjecting all kinds of wealth to the duty of providing for the national defence. So many hundreds a year, so many men; and so many horses as well for the thousand a year—a kind of graduated income tax which does not appear to have had much success.

Under these regulations the Militia carried on its existence in a more or less dormant condition; generally more so, for on the whole the Militia found itself out of favour during a time, the fashion of which was for foreign wars and foreign mercenaries. And in this its slumbrous state, which lasted well-nigh a century, people had entirely forgotten that they might be called upon at any moment to take part in the national defence. In the old days, with personal service, there was little to pay. Life was easier, too; and the occasional call to arms was often a not unwelcome interlude in a country life. But now with heavy taxes and crushing rents upon their shoulders, the peasantry were little disposed to endure the burden of forced service; while the townsfolk, devoted to trade, had no mind to see sons and apprentices marched off to drill and manoeuvre, when they should be at work in shop or counting-house.

And thus, although foreign soldiers were unpopular, and people rejoiced to hear that the Hessians were disbanded, yet, when the new ministry in 1756 brought in a bill for increasing and reorganising the Militia, and to call out thirty-two thousand men to be selected by ballot from the population in general, the measure became widely unpopular.

The service was not, in truth, very burdensome. Men were not taken far from their homes. The training was continuous at first, lasting from March till October, but only on the first and third Mondays in the month, when the men exercised in companies and half companies respectively for six hours a day. Whitsun week was the great time for the militiaman. On the Monday he set out for the headquarters of his regiment, and there battalion drill went on till Friday night, when he might make his way home again. Were he insubordinate, he was haled before the magistrate and fined, with the terrors of the House of Correction looming in the distance.

The author of a "Militiaman's Manual," writing in 1760, comments on "the truly commendable spirit with which the Nobility and Gentry have engaged in the present established Militia." But there was rioting and confusion all over the country at the first attempt to enforce the ballot, or conscription as it might be called. The parish constables were charged with the duty of collecting the lists of men capable of serving, in their respective parishes. But angry mobs in many places set upon the constables, destroyed the lists, and then there was the work to begin again. In the northern counties, where people resented still more the notion of compulsory service, serious riots arose. At Hexham, the proceedings of drawing the ballot were interrupted by an angry mob. Six companies of the existing York Militia were called up, and as the people still held their ground, the troops fired, and twenty-one of the rioters were killed, and many wounded. At the Assize Courts, many were brought up for trial, for obstructing the progress of the ballot; one man was hanged, and a number of people were transported.

In one way or other, however, the ballot was carried out, and the Militia reorganised. Its officers now held equal rank with those of the regular army, although junior in their respective ranks. The rank and file were equally subject to the provisions of the Mutiny Act. Yet

the control of the Militia still rested with the Lord-Lieutenants of counties.

The force thus constituted was a highly respectable one, officered by the local notables, and composed of all classes of society. In dress and equipment the militiaman was probably better off than the regular soldier. We see him—the private—in prints of the period, with cocked hat, ruffles, and starched cravat. His coat and wide sleeves were adorned with gold lace; his voluminous skirts, folded back, showed his long, flapped, flowered waistcoat, breeches, and long gaiters. A wide bandolier over his shoulders carried his cartridges and ammunition, and a pouch beneath his broad waist-belt contained spare flints, oil for his gunlock, and odd requisites. His hair was powdered, his face clean shaven, and altogether he was a quite imposing personage. A little later, and we shall find Royalty itself exercised about the militiaman's "coiffure." It was His Majesty's pleasure that all should wear their hair queued, to be tied a little below the upper part of the collar of the coat, and to be ten inches in length, including one inch of hair below the binding.

His Majesty's orders must be obeyed; but they caused some embarrassment to commanding officers. To grow a pigtail ten inches long is not the work of a moment; and—in the meantime! But, happily, in one case, at all events—the Third West York—a way was found out of the difficulty. False queues were allowable, and could be provided at once, but to add a realistic touch to the imitation, each private was ordered to supply as much hair as should form the "inch below the binding."

But although all this looks a little absurd, yet no doubt the pigtail had its uses. The militiaman's moral tone was probably raised by wearing it. He was "respectit like the lave," and his sweet-heart, no doubt, admired him all the more for his dignified bearing.

It would be interesting, by the way, to know when the last of the pigtails disappeared—if it has disappeared—from the British army. The Twenty-third (Welsh) Regiment used to wear the black bow, which represented the tie of it, on their coat collars, till within recent days; but whether any trace of it still remains, is more than this deponent can say.

From the date of its establishment on a regular footing, the Militia took a strong position, and greatly increased the fighting strength of the country. In

the seven years' war which followed, the Militia, permanently embodied and mobilised, guaranteed the safety of the country, and left the active army free to operate abroad. The victories which followed—Wolfe's, at Quebec, and Indian conquests—which so consolidated and extended our Colonial Empire, would have been impossible without the Militia to hold the forts, and guard the coast at home.

Dismissed at the end of the seven years' war in 1762, the Militia was again embodied from 1778 to 1783, while the War of Independence in America was going on, badly enough for us, but how much the worse but for the steady, well-drilled battalions of Militia who constituted our home defence. Only some nine years passed, and the Militia was once more called out, and were embodied from 1792 to 1813, and in the case of many regiments served continuously during the whole course of our desperate struggle with Napoleon. In effect, the Militia of that period formed the reserve of the army that fought under Wellington. For, during the war, the Militia supplied one hundred thousand men to the regular army. Without such a reserve force, England must have abandoned the contest, and the leopard—as Napoleon used to phrase it—would have been driven into the sea. Many of the Militia regiments volunteered for foreign service; and two, at least, were engaged in the final campaign of the Peninsular War—the Royal Westmoreland, who landed at Bordeaux in 1813, and formed part of the seventh division of the Duke's army, although they were too late for the Battle of Toulouse; and the Royal Denbighs, who were also with Sir Watkin and the Duke in the South of France.

With the end of the French War the Militia were dismissed to their homes, but called out again suddenly on the news of Napoleon's escape from Elba. However, this campaign, though sharp, was short, and the Militia, once more disembodied, entered upon another period of suspended animation.

While the great war had lasted, the career of a Militia regiment had been varied. Take the Third West York, the history of which has been embodied in a portly volume by Major Raikes. In 1803 they moved from York to Colchester, taking nearly a fortnight over the route, which was pleasant enough, for the earlier part of the march by Tad-

caster, Pontefract, Doncaster, Retford, and Newark; thence along the flat and fenny country through Grantham, where there was a Sunday rest; and Stamford, where the regiment was quartered in the villages round about and some at the barracks at Norman Cross, where there was a great depôt for French prisoners.

Perhaps there was a certain Captain Borrow quartered at the Cross at the time, with part of a Norfolk regiment of Militia, whose son George has given us a slight sketch of the place in "Lavengro." "Five or six caserns, very long and immensely high, isolated, and each standing upon some ten acres of ground, surrounded with palisades, and the whole compassed about with a towering wall."

Barracks, prison, and all have now disappeared; but we may picture the Royal Yorks marching past, and the Royal Norfolks turning out to do them honour, bands playing, swords and bayonets glittering, and the air filled with a glow of scarlet and gold lace. Taking a glimpse of the private, we shall find him a smart fellow in a tall bearakin, and curving plume. Great white epaulettes adorn his shoulders; his cross-belts are of the whitest pipeclay hue; his buckles and his accoutrements shine like silver; his breeches and leggings fit him excellently well. Indeed, he is every inch a soldier in bearing and costume.

Clearly, however, our regiment did not come to a stand at Norman Cross, but marched on still on the flat, but with green and pleasant country, on the way to Huntingdon and Godmanchester, where no doubt they heard the "story of the sturgeon and the black pig," to which Mr. Pepys makes playful allusion in his diary.

And from Huntingdon they would march, these old legionaries—almost as ancient to us as the Romans who marched so often along this identical route lang syne—well, they would march along the old Roman way, Via Devana to Cambridge, and halt for the night among the colleges and groves of that ancient seat of learning. And in the morning early, akirting those strange Gogmagog Hills, where they would find memories of earlier races of warriors scored here and there on the green turf. The Roman road goes straight over the hills; but our gallant Yorkists, dreading no surprise, would divide and take the turnpike roads which flank the hills on either side, and so rest

for the night, one wing in the straggling town of Linton, and the other at Haverhill, billeted up and down its high street a mile long. The next day's march was to Halstead and Hedingham respectively, where the regiment filled the parish churches no doubt—for Sunday intervened—and the Yorkists rested for the day in the quiet, half-decayed little towns. It was no long march to Colchester next day, where the regiment marched in with the tow-row of British Grenadiers, and so were quartered under the shadow of the old Roman walls.

You can fancy how the townsfolk would stare as the officers assembled for mess at the chief hotel, in blue pantaloons, half-boots, hair powdered, smart pigtails and caps, to say nothing of their scarlet and gold-laced jackets. From Colchester, after a while, the regiment was moved into Kent, and quartered at Faversham and Ospringe, ready to receive the dreaded Boney if he came that way; and from thence they were moved to Oatham, and afterwards occupied Ashford, where there are more railway-porters than soldiers now-a-days. And then the danger of invasion being considered over, the gallant Yorks marched back to Hull.

It was no mere holiday-soldiering, either; for any day might bring the news that the enemy had landed on the coast, and then it would be the Militia who would have to bear the brunt of meeting the finest and most seasoned troops in Europe, with a veritable Cæsar at their head.

But with the piping times of peace there was no more Militia to speak of for many long years. Now and then people would be frightened out of their senses by rumours of an impending ballot; but nothing would come of it. What the Militia ballot was to the professional and middle classes of those days, we may judge of by an incident in the life of David Cox, the great water-colourist.

In 1813 he was living at Dulwich, giving lessons and sketching all round, among wharves, old buildings, piers, bridges, and craft in the river. Suddenly he hears that he is drawn for the Militia. A substitute will cost him fifty pounds. It might be as well five hundred, as far as the hope of raising it is concerned. The war has lasted twenty years, and may last another twenty, and the Militia be embodied all the time. David took to flight, hid himself here and there, and showed

himself no more about his old haunts till the danger was over.

The last ballot for the Militia took place in 1830; but it was not a very formidable affair, for there was not any prospect of the Militia being called out, and substitutes were easily obtained. Indeed, the whole force remained in a dormant condition till 1850, when a new Act was passed, and eighty thousand men were called for from England and Wales. The age for service was fixed from eighteen to thirty-five years, and the ballot might be used where necessary. But the service was limited to five years, and a bounty of six pounds spread over that period secured a sufficient number of recruits without resorting to extremities. The force was raised just in time for the Crimean War, when the whole was embodied, and many regiments volunteered for foreign service. Sundry regiments were stationed in garrison at Malta and Gibraltar; and the Militia in general was brought to a creditable state of efficiency, while it furnished a constant supply of officers, and upwards of thirty thousand men, for the regiments in the field.

In 1856 the Militia was disembodied, only to be re-embodied in the crisis of the Indian Mutiny. Since that time, the force has been again remodelled, and shared in the general reorganisation of the army in 1871. As this scheme localised, in theory, the regiments of the regular army, it only remained to arrange the Militia as so many battalions attached to those of the active army.

Thus, in a kind of colourable imitation of the system adopted in Continental armies, the whole array should consist of the first line or regular army, with its reserve; and the second army, or Militia, with a corresponding reserve. And the reservists of the first army should pass into the Militia when their period of active service had expired, and, in course of time, pass into the reserve of the Militia, till they were past the age for service.

Nothing of the kind, however, occurs. Regulars and Militia recruit from the same classes at the same ages, and the Militia regiment can only be considered as a kind of dormant regiment of the line—the sketch of a regiment, in fact, which would have to be filled up in a great hurry when any emergency arose.

Then the ballot might come in. We are in the habit of saying that the question of a conscription in England is outside the

line of practical politics. But, in reality, we have a conscription of a limited and partial character, which might be brought into action at any moment. Let us suppose that a national emergency has arisen, and that Parliament has voted an increase of the Militia from its present establishment of one hundred and forty-seven thousand, to, say, two hundred and fifty thousand men. A proclamation is issued by the Crown, embodying the whole force, and it is then the duty of the Secretary for War to apportion the quota to be raised by each county or quasi-county in the kingdom.

Then the Lord Lieutenant would have to move. He has ceased to be the head of the Militia, which is now directly under the authority of the Crown; but for the purposes of the levy he is still in authority. The Deputy Lieutenants, hitherto only known for their smart, gold-laced uniforms, would come into play. One of them would preside over each sub-division, to whom the householders of each parish would send in lists of all male persons between eighteen and thirty residing with them. These lists having been delivered, and the quota of each parish arranged; first, the number of voluntary enlistments from each parish would be taken into consideration. The number of such being deducted from the quota, the deficiency, if any, would be raised by choosing, by lot, double the number required. Then exemptions may be claimed, and such as are allowed struck off the list. From the corrected list the vacancies must be filled up in numerical order.

All this reads like a cunningly-devised fable, to spread alarm among those otherwise fortunate persons who have not yet attained the age of thirty-five years. But such is the existing state of the law, and there are conceivable emergencies in which it might be necessary to carry it into effect.

In its existing state, the Militia has suffered some slight decline of late years. There were enrolled, for the training of 1886, a total for the United Kingdom of one hundred and twenty-one thousand five hundred and seventy-six. Of these, fifteen thousand nine hundred and ninety failed to put in an appearance, leaving one hundred and five thousand five hundred and eighty-six present at the annual training. But of these some twenty thousand were recruits, hardly to be counted as effectives; and the Militia reserve, number-

ing some thirty thousand, must also be deducted from the available force of the Militia, in case of hostilities. For the Militia reserve is really a reserve for the regular army, and would at once pass into it in a case of national danger or emergency. And thus the Militia cannot be reckoned at more than fifty thousand men ready to take the field. And that, it must be confessed, is but a poor show for the one hundred and fifty or so battalions which, if up to full strength, should bring some one hundred and forty thousand combatants into the field.

However, the future of the Militia still rests doubtful. Perhaps the name will disappear altogether—to be replaced by army reserve, or some such title—and although it has an honourable history, and a famous pedigree, yet it is not particularly appropriate to present conditions of service, and it militates somewhat against that practical unity which should exist in every branch of the national army. But if the name is replaced by another, the thing itself is far too valuable to be neglected; and in one form or another the old national force must remain as an integral part of the national army.

RED HAIR.

THE prejudice against red hair is both ancient and wide-spread. For centuries the popular mind throughout Europe has associated hair of this unlucky colour with untrustworthiness and deceit. An old Latin "Collection of Proverbs," by Henry Bebel, published in Germany in 1512, has the following:

"Raro breves humiles vidi rufosque fideles" (Proud are the short, and untrustworthy the red-haired.)

The Italians have a milder saying:

"Capelli rossi, o tutto foco o tutto mosci." (Red hair, either all fire or all softness.)

There is an old French rhyme, dating from the seventeenth century, which says:

Homme roux et femme barbue
De trente pas loin le salue,
Avecques trois pierres au poing
Pour t'en aider à ton besoin.

(Salute a red-haired man or bearded woman at thirty feet off, with three stones in thy fist to defend thee in thy need.)

The same sentiment of dislike and distrust is found continually cropping up in our own older literature.

It did not pass altogether without rebuke. Writers on vulgar errors occa-

sionally denounced the prejudice, and a Gascon writer and soldier of the seventeenth century, Cyrano de Bergerac, the author of various humorous and satirical pieces, boldly praised and glorified the despised colour. His work on the "States and Empires of the Sun" was translated into English, and in it he says that:

"A Brave head covered with Red Hair is nothing else but the sun in the midst of his rays, yet many speak ill of it, because few have the honour to be so."

And again, that flaxen hair betokens fickleness, and black obstinacy; but between both, he says, is the medium:

"Where wisdom in favour of Red-Haired men hath lodged virtue, so their flesh is much more delicate, their blood more pure, their spirits more clarified, and consequently their intellect more accomplished, because of the mixture of the four qualities."

At the present day, in the North, it is considered unlucky for a red-haired man to be the first to enter a new house. There is also a notion that if such a man be the first to enter a house on New Year's morning, ill-luck will surely follow, and will probably result in a death in the house before the end of the year. The popular prejudice seems to have originated in the tradition that Judas Iscariot was red-headed. There is a further tradition that the rebellious Absalom's luxuriant locks were of the obnoxious colour; but it is hardly necessary to go beyond Judas for the origin of the feeling. Most of the old painters represent the traitorous Apostle with hair of the traditional colour. There is one notable exception, however, for, in Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," Judas has black hair.

The adjective, "Judas-haired," and similar allusive phrases, frequently occur in old writers. In "As You Like It," Rosalind says of Orlando: "His very hair is of the dissembling colour;" to which Celia replies: "Something browner than Judas's." A character in Marston's "Insatiate Countess" says: "I ever thought by his red beard hee would prove a Judas; here am I bought and sold."

Dryden frequently quarrelled with his publisher, Jacob Tonson, a man of very unprepossessing appearance, about payments; and on one occasion the poet sent him the following libellous lines:

With leering looks, bull-faced, and freckled fair,
With two left legs, and Judas-coloured hair,
And frowy pores that taint the ambient air.

With this pleasing beginning Dryden sent the message: "Tell the dog that he who wrote these lines can write more."

A modern allusion to the tradition is found in Matthew Arnold's poem, "St. Brandon":

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
Of hair that red and tufted fell;
It is—oh, where shall Brandon fly?—
The traitor Judas, out of hell.

Although the traditional reason for the obnoxiousness of the colour has probably died out of popular recollection, red hair still remains the subject of vulgar reproach and sarcasm. The taunting cry of "ginger" or "carrots" is familiar to the ear attuned to catch the echoes of the street. In America "mahogany top" is a similar term of reproach. "Carrots" and "carroty" are found pretty frequently in literature from the middle of the seventeenth century to our own time. "In the 'Book of Snobs,' the terrible old Lady Clapperclaw pours contempt upon the daughter of her rival, poor Blanche Muggins, with her 'radish of a nose, and her carrots of ringlets.' In Ireland 'foxy' is a more common term. Dunat O'Leary, the hair-cutter in Gerald Griffin's once famous novel, 'The Collegians,' upon which the popular 'Colleen Bawn' is founded, was known as Foxy Dunat in allusion to his red poll. Sydney Smith made amusing and effective use of the popular prejudice in his 'Peter Plymley's Letters.'

Notwithstanding the odium that may naturally be supposed to have attached to red hair in times past on account of its association with Judas, yet the same colour of beard seems sometimes to have been regarded with more kindly eyes. It was the mode in Elizabethan times to colour the beard, and red would appear to have been a fashionable tint, for in the first act of Lodowick Barry's comedy of 'Ram-Alley' there is this dialogue:

Taffeta. What coloured beard comes next by the window?

Adriana. A black man's, I think.

Taffeta. I think not so; I think a red, for that is most in fashion.

The custom, like other fashionable absurdities, was ridiculed on the boards of the theatres. Dekker recommends any one who has been stung by a play-writer's epigram, or who has been insulted by having his feather, or his red beard, or his little legs brought on the stage, to rise in the middle of the performance "with a

screw'd and discontented face from your stoole to be gone," and to draw out after him as large a body of companions as he can get to follow him.

Burbage, the famous actor of Shakespearean times, was known as the "red-haired Jew," because, in his performance of Shylock, hair and beard of fiery hue formed prominent features in his "make-up." Tradition adds that he also donned a long and hooked false nose and a tawny petticoat, and thus arrayed, delighted the vulgar tastes of the gallery folk; but there is no good authority for the statement, and the story is highly improbable. Ben Jonson had hair of the ruddy hue. When, in the course of explorations amongst the vaults beneath Westminster Abbey, made in 1849, the remains of "Rare Ben" were discovered, a few hairs, undoubtedly red, were still to be seen adhering to the skull. Shakespeare's hair is usually described as auburn; but it was perhaps dangerously near the more pronounced colour, for it seems very probable that the "Rufus" of John Marston's satire, "Pigmalion's Image," published in 1598, and the "Rufus Laberius Crispinus" of Ben Jonson's "Poetaster" were both intended to refer to William Shakespeare.

The dislike to red hair has been referred by some enquirers to another origin than the Judas tradition. The ancient Danes were a red-headed people; and it has been suggested that to the terror and hatred roused throughout the country at the time, and by the memory of their sanguinary raids, may be attributed the prejudice against all people with hair of their colour. In the west of Cornwall "red-headed Dane" is the most insulting term of reproach that the native mind can invent. The Ohinamar, in a similar complimentary spirit, alludes in his own language to the detested foreigner as the "red-haired man," or sometimes "red-haired devil." Cornishmen have a tradition that many centuries ago a great battle was fought on Gwenvor Sands, in Whitesand Bay, at the Land's End, between the natives under King Arthur, and bands of invading foreigners supposed to be "red-haired Danes." This opprobrious name has long been given to people with hair of the same hue, who are popularly supposed to be descendants of the ancient invaders; and until recent times so strong was the prejudice against these "Danes," that intermarriage with them was generally frowned upon, and, as far as possible,

discountenanced. The tradition further promises that the "red-haired Danes" will again some day attack Cornwall, and that the invasion will be speedily followed by the end of the world.

HAWTHORN.

THE hand I love has dropped a spray
Of softly-tinted, scented may,
The dew clings to it still;
The hand I love will never miss
The little flower that I can kiss
And fondle at my will.

THE heart I love will never guess
What charm to soothe life's loneliness,
I found beside the way;
With hands close-clasped about my prize,
I walk beneath the soft spring skies
So tender, yet so grey.

I walk alone, as I must go
For ever all my life below;
For me the gentle spring
That bears sweet messages to earth,
Hath naught to say of joy's new birth,
Or love's new blossoming.

And yet I love thee! Well—'tis well,
Though my locked lips may never tell
The tale with tender prayer.
I drop my poor heart in thy way,
As thou hast dropped this hawthorn spray,
But dost thou know—or care?

I stooped to grasp thy slighted flower,
Light-plucked, light-lost, in careless hour,
But wilt thou stoop to take
The humble heart that I have cast
Before thee—all its dreary past
Out-blotted for thy sake?

I hide thy flower upon a breast
That throbs with passionate unrest,
That aches and longs for thee!
But with calm face and placid eye
My poor, poor heart thou passest by,
And wilt not turn to see.

"Love gives itself," the poet sang,
"It is not bought." Truth's accent rang
In that undying strain;
Love gives itself—I give to thee
What none shall buy or beg from me,
And must I give in vain?

In vain? Love shames that selfish cry,
Love giveth unreservedly,
Without a thought of gain;
Love is content for no return
To watch and wait, to hope and yearn—
Love never is in vain!

So be it—and so best! My heart
Is fain to learn that selfless part,
The teaching is divine;
I love thee to life's longest day,
Though the dear hand that dropped the may,
Be never, never mine!

"FROM CONVICTION."

A COMPLETE STORY.

THEY were twins, the two brothers, and as much alike as twins generally are. Rich, young, handsome with all the beauty of their Irish race—the Fitzgeralds,

when they bought the old Appledore estate, quickly became the "cynosure of neighbouring eyes." The eyes of many daughters of the land, and not a few mothers.

The latter considered that young, eligible men, with incomes which tradition placed at two thousand a year each, were not met with every day. The former perceived that such good-looking young men were few and far between; and forthwith "hoped they should see something of the Mr. Fitzgeralds," as they gently expressed in conversation their firm determination that the Mr. Fitzgeralds should see a great deal of them.

The Vicar's daughters, the Doctor's sister, the Curate's aunt, who kept house for him and was fond of saying, how "very little difference in age" there was between herself and "dear Reginald"—twenty years apparently being a mere trifle in her eyes—together with many daughters of the country houses in the neighbourhood, all eagerly anticipated the first news, the earliest verdict on the new-comers.

The men who called on them said simply, after the concise manner of the sterner sex when describing each other: "Not a bad sort, either of them;" which was all as it should be; but, to the minds of their female relatives, lacked colour as a description. No more detailed one seemed forthcoming, however.

A terrible whisper crept about to the effect that the Fitzgeralds had "declined with thanks" the invitations to tennis and to dinner-parties which had been sent them, and had only dined out once since their arrival, at the house of an old Squire in the next county, a confirmed bachelor, who was known to his lady acquaintances as "a regular bear."

This was followed by the proclamation of a still more terrible fact. "The Mr. Fitzgeralds are—misogynists." When those who did not know what the word meant had condescended to believe those who had looked in a dictionary, and did, hope contradicted the poet's words, in that it fled at once and for ever from the feminine breast in Appledore.

For it was true. Bob Fitzgerald himself had said it. The Vicar had called on the brothers at once, parochially of course, and, to him, Bob had put it very plainly:

"My brother and I do not go into society—not general society, that is. We are misogynists, from conviction. Never have anything to do with any women.

"You'll come and see us though, as often as you care to?"

The good man assented readily. His instincts were sociable, and, without altogether agreeing with his hosts, he could not but confess to himself that moments did occur in his own daily life, when he found the society of the five women to whom he belonged a trifle monotonous.

The simple fact was that it seemed to the brothers that woman's chief end was to marry men, and having married him, to make him miserable for ever.

And having seen one after another of their greatest cronies fall into this terrible pitfall, and finding it difficult in London wholly to keep out of the society they dreaded and hated, they took this old country place and settled down in safety; for the women could not force themselves on two bachelors. In town, their own sisters, cousins, and aunts had formed a too close connecting link. Here, there was none.

In their ménage, their principles were faithfully carried out. All the servants were men, except one old woman, who was very deaf and very ancient. To the presence of this one member of the despised sex they had been obliged to submit, as butler, footmen, page-boys, and errand boys all drew a hard and fast line round their respective duties, within which line nor words nor wages could induce them to include bed-making.

There was, naturally, an oddly masculine air about the rooms. Comfort was studied, appearances comparatively disregarded, for, though all the furniture and decoration was good and artistic, everything lacked the finishing touches which only a woman can give.

There was a curiously lonely look about the drawing-room, which contained, as Jem proudly said, "No women's gimcracks," and in the dining-room, dust lay thickly in corners and crevices, too small to come within the wide, masculine field of vision, either of masters or servants.

The smoking-room was in too constant use to bear any traces of the rather desolate aspect of the rest of the house. Perhaps, unconsciously to themselves, this influenced the two brothers in the frequent use they made of it. They were sitting there together, one showery afternoon, about a week after the Vicar's call, each with a cigar and a more or less engrossing paper, enjoying themselves in

attitudes which were sufficiently characteristic.

Jem, the slighter and fairer of the two, lay at full length in a long, cushioned deck-chair, his grey eyes lazily staring into the fire, and his arms crossed. Bob, whose clear-cut, handsome features were an exact copy of his brother's, except that they were copied in a brown skin instead of a fair one, sat upright on a chair turned the wrong way, so that his face and its back faced the fire together. He was restlessly jerking the chair backwards and forwards, and pulling his heavy moustache with one hand, while the other held his half-finished cigar.

His was the leading spirit of the two. He was more determined, more enterprising than Jem. He it was who had proposed this arrangement; had taken the house; had engaged their domestic retainers; had returned the calls of those men who had called on the two; and had infused enough spirit into Jem to make him believe that the whole thing was what he had himself all along intended to suggest to Bob as "a good move."

Jem went through life with an easy insouciance, which, as he often mentally observed, "saved no end of trouble." He was thinking—as he watched Bob's chair jerk more and more, and Bob look more serious than he himself often felt called upon to do—how uncomfortable it must be to worry oneself about anything, and wondering if he should exert himself to break the silence which had lasted for the last five minutes, when Bob's chair suddenly stood still, and he said, abruptly:

"I say, Jem, there are more women hereabouts than we bargained for, I'm afraid."

"Same everywhere," Jem responded, briefly.

"It's a nuisance, when the place is so exactly what we want—shooting, and everything."

"They don't bother us."

"They may. There is no being up to the ways that women have of getting at one. I got a note yesterday from Mrs. Russell—subscription to the decorations, or something. If I don't answer it, she'll come and call. If I do, she'll equally call to thank me. I know them all."

"Be out," suggested his brother. "You've no resources, Bob. By the way, did you meet the Vicar to-day? Out with four women! Great Scott! I'd be buried alive first!"

"He is," answered Bob, grimly, "under feminine strata of various ages."

"His life must be a burden," continued Jem, lazily.

"A burden!" echoed Bob. "Rather! And such an unnecessary one; as if life weren't quite bother enough, without giving yourself a double share of every annoying detail in the shape of a woman's fads."

"There are those who say that the process diminishes annoying details," Jem said, with an odd twinkle in his eyes. There were moments when he loved to tease Bob.

"There are those who will swear that two and two make five," retorted his brother. "Thank goodness, if there is one subject I understand, one subject I have well thought out, it is woman."

"You can't speak from experience, though."

"From study, which is far more conclusive. Speak from experience! Heaven save me—or rather, I'm quite capable of saving myself from so humiliating a fall!"

"You're aggressive this afternoon, Bob. What's up?"

"I'm bothered. I want to go to Shirland. He's taken that large moor. I want some shooting there awfully; but—he's got lots of sisters, and that house is so full of women. It will be hateful; and I can't make up my mind."

"Oh, go; the women won't bother you. They don't go on much when once they know how one feels, I think—not seriously. And Shirland knows—he'll say."

"Oh, he'll tell them all right. You'd go, then, would you, and chance ten or twelve girls?"

"Rather. I wish he'd asked me, that's all. You'll see so little of his women, it's not worth bothering about."

"All right. I think I shall. What shall you do? Go to Paris, or yachting, or what?"

"Oh, Paris; for a fortnight or so, I think. Come out, it's lifting just now, and I want to see Edwards about those pheasants."

Jem did not go at once to Paris, after Bob's departure, however.

Every other day he looked out trains and boats; and on the days in between he made up his mind that he must first go to his tailor.

But as the making up of Jem's mind

was a process which generally took till four o'clock or so in the afternoon, it was impossible to "run up" to London that same day, and he invariably ended by "sleeping over" the whole question.

The weather was glorious. Perfect September days are enough to make any man hesitate as to leaving a charming old country place for hot, dusty Paris—any man, at least, with Jem's lazy country-loving nature. And day after day slipped by.

Post-cards, the only form of correspondence he ever indulged in, proclaimed Bob's welfare, or asked that some indispensable article or other might be sent him, and Jem had nearly come to the conclusion that it was quite necessary he should give up Paris and "see after Bob's belongings," on the principle, perhaps, that any excuse is good enough for the inert mind, when the weather broke up completely and suddenly with a series of thunderstorms.

On the second day of alternate down-pour and grey, heavy skies, Jem sat in the smoking-room, and used strong language about his own folly in not going away before. He had indulged in this pastime for nearly an hour, while the sky grew gradually darker and darker, when a vivid, almost lurid flash of lightning, followed instantly by a crashing roll of thunder, made him start up and go, with the curious instinct we all have at those moments, to the window "to see" the invisible.

"It's awfully near," he said to himself, as he stood at the window. He looked towards the park to see if anything had been struck, then turned to the angle from which he could see the front entrance. "By Jove!" he exclaimed suddenly, flung down his cigar, strode out of the room, and in two seconds had reached the hall door, and flung it wide open, with amazement plainly written in his countenance.

There, dripping from head to foot, stood a girl. Her hat and its feathers were one soft, shapeless mass; her thick blue serge gown was dark and discoloured with rain; her brown hair was in short, tight wet curls; and tiny streams of rain all over her face.

But, notwithstanding all this, no one could have possessed a sweeter, fresher, more innocent-looking face than the one which was lifted to Jem, and grew crimson as she said, imploringly:

"Oh, I do beg your pardon, but I'm so frightened always in a thunderstorm. I

came to meet my uncle; I lost my way; I don't know these roads much, and—I didn't see any house but this when it began to thunder. May I just stand in the porch till it's over! I was going to ring and ask, when you came."

"Stand in the porch!" said Jem, hastily. "Goodness, no! Come in."

"Oh, this will do quite well, thanks," she said, looking more confused and prettier than before. "I'm only so afraid of the lightning."

"Nonsense," Jem said, abruptly; "you must get dry somehow. Come in."

Half-reluctantly and half-compelled to obey by the peremptory tone, which was the same Jem would have used to a man in like circumstances—his sentences had so rarely been framed for women's ears—she followed him across the hall, leaving a shower of tiny drops as she walked. He took her straight into the smoking-room—he had given himself the solace of a fire there—and rang the bell. The girl looked so surprised, so out of countenance at her surroundings, that even Jem understood, and said reassuringly:

"It's all right; I'll send for my—my—housemaid," after several vain attempts to give the anomalous position of their one woman inmate a name. "Send Mrs. Hewetson here at once," Jem said to the amazed footman.

"I'm staying at Weremouth," the girl said. "My uncle is Mr. Burnet. It was very foolish of me to get lost; but I did want a walk so, and he would have driven me back. It wasn't raining when I came— Oh!" as a second flash lighted up even the dark old engravings on the walls. "Oh—it's so near," and she grasped the back of a chair near to her. Then, with a sudden change of thought, only possible to a woman, "Oh, I'm spoiling your carpet so," she said, looking at the circle of wet drops around her.

"Hang the carpet! Oh, I beg your pardon," Jem responded; "but it doesn't matter two straws. I want you to get dry. Where is that woman?"

"That woman" opened the door at this instant, having delayed manifestly in order to get a clean apron.

"Mrs. Hewetson," Jem said, "take this lady and get her things dry. See after them carefully. And—and—Miss——"

Jem, suddenly remembering that he did not know the name of the girl whom the storm had thus cast at his doors, stopped short.

"Beatrice Kennedy, my name is," she said, with the first approach to a smile that had appeared on the shy little face. "I don't know yours, you know."

"Oh, I'm Jem Fitzgerald," her host answered, wondering if she had heard his name, and wishing, for the first time and half-unconsciously, that the traditions which clung to it were other than they were.

"It's so very kind of you," she began.

Then, in obedience to Jem's brusque, embarrassed "Nonsense! get dry quick, or you'll have a most awful cold," she moved to the door, and it closed behind the two women.

Jem sat down by the fire in more perturbation of spirit than his last inner self had known for years. What would Bob say? Would this woman be the means of bringing a whole lot of others about the place? Would all her people come and call?

Well, it was no good bothering. She was a stranger, going away soon, very likely. And no one, not Bob even, could have sent her away in this rain.

He did not ever remember seeing a woman quite like her before. There couldn't be many with that curly hair, and those lovely large dark grey eyes, which had looked so round and childlike when she was frightened just now.

He stirred the fire meditatively. A lingering thought was in his mind that perhaps some were better than others, perhaps all women weren't so scheming and insincere as he had always thought. But he pulled himself up quickly, saying aloud: "What a fool you are, Jem! As if you didn't know the whole lot through and through!" And he left these vague imaginings for the more practical thought that had just occurred to him. First that something hot to drink was good, surely, when you got so wet as that; and what did women drink? Could he offer her whisky? The second was that he must offer to drive her home, whether he liked it or not.

There was no sign on his face of not liking it when, twenty minutes later, he stood by the fire with his rough-weather coat on. On a table at his elbow stood hot claret and water. He had decided that this was "more in a woman's line."

The door opened, and Miss Kennedy came in, looking, if possible, prettier than when she stood in the rain on the steps.

One hand gathered together the many folds of a voluminous short black gown of Mrs. Hewetson's; the other drew a large grey woollen shawl into what folds were possible to its thick texture. Her hat was the only one of her own properties which adorned the little figure.

"My things won't be dry for so long," she said, seeing Jem's look, "that your housekeeper has lent me these. I've come to say good-bye, and thank you very much indeed for being so good to me; and will you tell me which is the quickest way for me to get home—to Weremouth?"

"You're not going yet," said Jem. "And when you do go, I'm going to drive you in my dog-cart. Come here and have this to drink. Nonsense," as he saw she was going to refuse. "Come, you must. You'll be no end foolish not to."

The colour ran in waves all over her face. But she did as Jem's peremptory words bade her, and then said, hesitatingly:

"It's so very good of you. Uncle will thank you; but I can't bear you to have the trouble—of driving me. I'd so much rather not."

"I'd much rather, though."

And Jem spoke the truth. He was beginning to think that it really did not matter, for the present, whether those eyes were insincere or not. He wanted to go on looking at them.

He tucked her up in the dog-cart, jumped in after her, and came to the conclusion, as they drove along, that wet weather was most agreeable and pleasing, and the desire for a fine summer popular prejudice only.

Jem's horse grew thoroughly acquainted with that road in the course of the next few weeks.

He refused Mr. Burnet at first, when the old gentleman—honestly grateful for Jem's care of his niece—gave him the ordinary English tangible form of thanks, a pressing invitation to dine.

But when Mr. Burnet answered his refusal by: "Not go into society! I'm not offering you society, my dear sir, only just a quiet dinner with my niece and myself—just Trix and me, that's all," Jem gave in, weakly, he thought, with one side of his decisive faculty; the other side had got past caring for anything while he could have a chance of seeing those grey eyes.

Two quiet evenings with "Trix and me," brought Jem to the conclusion that

Bob was not infallible. Some women might be trustworthy—and, suddenly, he found that he would have answered with all he held dear for Beatrice Kennedy's faith.

The third time, he went to Weremouth "Just to call," he said; but a call lasting from five to ten is, fortunately, rare. Neither is it wholly conventional to take your hostess into your arms, at leaving, and kiss her. Jem did; nor did he look confused when he became aware that old Mr. Burnet stood in a doorway watching them, with an odd smile at the corners of his mouth.

Three months had gone since Bob left Appledore for Scotland; his postcards had grown fewer and fewer. Which was perhaps as well, for Jem certainly had had no time to answer them. He had not written himself. "Explanations take so many sheets of paper," he said.

"And so much trouble, you lazy Jem," said his wife.

They were standing together by the fire in the smoking-room; both her hands were clasped round one of his arms, his other arm was round her alight shoulders, and his hand ruffled her brown, curly hair.

"Well, he'll be home soon, for certain, and that's simplest. Afraid of him! Nonsense, Trix; why? Hates women? Well, you know—so—"

But Jem was interrupted by the hasty opening of the door.

"Bob!" he exclaimed, as he became aware that his brother, in travelling coat and cap, stood before him.

"Jem, I thought I should find you here," Bob began. Then he suddenly caught sight of the little figure standing by Jem, and broke off with an indefinable look on his face.

"Let me introduce you to Mrs. James Fitzgerald, Bob," was Jem's somewhat irrelevant response.

But Bob turned on his heel abruptly, and went out of the room. Before Jem had time to answer Trix's anxious words, Bob was back again, and with him a tall, dark, graceful girl.

"Let me introduce you to Mrs. Robert Fitzgerald, Jem," he said.

The vicar's daughter, the doctor's sister, the curate's aunt, unanimously agreed that "when people change their minds, they should change them reasonably," and the Mrs. Fitzgeralds are hardly so popular with those ladies as they deserve to be.

JACQUES BONHOMME :

THE MAN.

AT twenty years of age complete, our Jacques is, or ought to be, a man, seeing that he is called upon to take his place amongst his country's defenders. He draws for the Conscription.

Every year, on an appointed day, at the Mairie or Town Hall, all young men—born within certain areas and given dates—are summoned to draw from a bowl a number, which determines their time of service in the ranks. The numbers are stamped or written on papers of equal size, carefully folded, so as to allow no possibility of selection. The conscript is at liberty to stir up these folded papers in the bowl, and then take the one which he fancies gives him the best chance.

The difference is great between the Conscription, as practised before the Franco-German War of 1870, and that which obtains at the present day, when everybody, without distinction, has to be a soldier. The numbers drawn by conscripts range from one, upwards, to a number corresponding with the number of young men on the registers who are liable to serve. The total number depends, of course, on the male population fully twenty years of age belonging to each locality. Absence gives no exemption from drawing; for if a young man is ill or away, his father or his nearest relation draws in his stead, and if no relation be there, the Maire. But, as the number of conscripts required was mostly less than the number liable to serve, the highest numbers drawn were equivalent to exemption, while the lowest involved the certainty of being taken.

Before the war, all conscripts who drew had a double chance of exemption. First, from the possibility of drawing a "good number"; next, from the permission to purchase a substitute, if their parents were able to afford it. There were agents, familiarly known as "marchands d'hommes," dealers in men, who supplied the article—at a fixed price, as regularly as any other merchandise is sold in the market—in the shape of old soldiers, who willingly accepted a fresh engagement, for a consideration; or of young men, left free by their good number, who chose to barter their liberty for a round sum of money. But, now that no substitution is allowed, the men-merchant's occupation is gone.

Exemption, nevertheless, is sometimes, though rarely, attempted to be secured by self-mutilation of the hand or foot, by simulated disease, or artificial sores. Such offences, when discovered and proved by the army-surgeons, are severely punished.

Amongst the most ignorant of the population, there exist impostors and charlatans who pretend to assure luck at the Conscription by incantations, sorcery, and other devices. So lately as the month of March in the present year, a woman was condemned to a month's imprisonment by the tribunal of Saint-Gaudens—in the Department of the Upper Garonne, within sight of the distant Pyrenees—for the exercise of her speciality, which consisted in procuring exemption from military service by administering to conscripts certain potions, of whose composition she kept the secret, and by making in front of them, as they proceeded to draw lots, a few more or less magnetic passes.

But, to do Jacques Bonhomme justice, he is not a coward. If he would willingly escape the Conscription, it is not through fear. He dislikes it because it changes all his habits, and takes him away from his beloved home. Now that everybody has to learn the use of firearms, and that military service is inevitable, it is looked upon in much the same way as the common herd of mankind consider death. Everybody must die, one day or other; every individual knows that he must one day die, although, as Dr. Young truly says, "All men think all men mortal but themselves." But he does not trouble enough about the matter to daily recall the unpleasant fact to his mind. In the same way, though every man must be a soldier, war is not just now raging; and, moreover, in war, everybody is not killed. Men come back, even from Tonkin. So the law of universal Conscription, when it comes to be applied, is accepted in the same spirit as the law of universal mortality.

The rigours of military life, too, may be softened by the soldier's mastery of some useful trade, which circumstances may require him to exercise in the regiment. He prefers any of those occupations to drill or "corvées," that is, fatigue-parties. Some garrisons have large plots of ground attached, on which vegetables are cultivated for the consumption of the men. A good gardener herein finds an agreeable relief from his regulation tasks. A skilful performer on any brass wind-instrument stands a chance of being incorporated into

the band. The young man selected for his officer's orderly, has an easy time of it, if he takes care to deserve it, especially if, by little attentions and opportune services, he can merit and gain the good will of his officer's lady.

The term of military service is still undergoing changes; its eventual duration is not finally determined. There is talk of a uniform three years' service for all. Uniformity and equality, however, are not easy of attainment, even in a Republic—less so, in fact, than under a Cæsar. The "Volontariat d'un An," still existing, but threatened with extinction, to profit by which an examination has to be passed and money paid down, is quite different from a young man's voluntary enlistment in the army before the time when he would be legally compelled to draw for the Conscription. He gains some slight advantages, besides perhaps gratifying his own personal tastes, by thus anticipating the date of drawing.

The conscript is not called out to join his regiment until the end of the current year; which gives him a little time for reflection and the settlement of his affairs at home. The low numbers drawn now impose, nominally, five years, often considerably shortened; the high and good numbers, one year only. Sometimes an incorrigibly uncouth, stupid, or slovenly young fellow will be "réformé" before his time is out; that is, discharged and sent about his business, as hopelessly incapable and not worth the trouble of punishing.

But all, as has been stated, must draw. Excuses derived from real bodily infirmities—hump-back, blindness, lameness, chronic disease, or from being the eldest son of a widow—are afterwards duly considered and allowed for by the Conseil de Révision. Even girls, who have been stupidly entered in the Register of Births as boys, by masculine names, have been obliged to draw for the Conscription—or the Maire in their stead—and the mistake rectified afterwards.

Once in the army, in full swing as a soldier, permissions to come home for a while, varying from forty-eight hours to a month or two, depend entirely on circumstances—his own good conduct, the pleasure of his commanding officer, the possibility of sparing his services in the regiment, or the need of his presence at home for urgent family affairs, such as the illness or death of a parent. In harvest time, when hands are short and crops are

praying hard to be got in, in good condition, a farmer will perhaps be allowed to receive a certain number of men to help him with his agricultural labours. For the soldiers, who are sure to be heartily welcomed in such a case, the change of work is as good as a holiday. And Jacques is now a well-grown man, robust in health and sound in muscle.

I might, not unreasonably, here be asked:

Upon what meats does this our Bonhomme feed. That he is grown so stout?

Well, those same growth-giving meats are mainly derived from the Vegetable Kingdom. Bread, and plenty of it, is the grand foundation of his dietary. Potatoes are admitted, as an addition and a change; but not, as in Ireland, as the staff of life. Salad in unlimited quantity and frequency, from the beginning to the end of its season: mâche, corn-salad, or lamb-lettuce—a great favourite, although, being eaten, it leaves an after-taste of one's having swallowed drugs from an apothecary's shop—dandelion, green and blanched; radishes, little red, round, and long, and big black, white, or yellow Spanish; lettuce, cos and cabbage; water-cress; endive, curled and broad-leaved; and cooked beetroot, cold; are all considerable articles of consumption, of course helped down with a huge slice of bread.

"How often can you eat salad?" I asked a young peasant.

"Three times a day, monsieur, so long as it lasts," was the answer.

French beans—"princesses" or "flagolets"—are in great request, either hot, as a dinner dish, or cold, dressed as salad with oil and vinegar. Boiled haricots, also, plain, hot, or dressed as salad cold, come in as a substantial mess in winter.

An indispensable repast with the French working peasant, is his "collation," a solid slice of bread eaten at four or five o'clock in the afternoon, and frequently taken with him or carried out to him in the fields—perhaps with a little grease spread on it as a luxury—and consumed with a leaf of sorrel or lettuce laid on it as a thumb-piece; or their place is taken by a few spring onions—the thinnings of the beds—or a clove of garlic. In the South, a red, fiery capsicum is thus indulged in, to relieve and season the bread—which, perhaps, is partially made with the flour of maize. Supported by this inexpensive treat, the rustics resume their work till supper-time.

In a country comprising such a variety of climates as France, certain details of the agricultural bill of fare necessarily vary somewhat with the region. But, everywhere, it is an acknowledged rule that the working-man's stomach should be well filled with something. His food is the fuel which keeps his locomotive going, and without which it must inevitably stop, just as a railway train would have to halt when the coals are burnt out.

A retired farmer, of my acquaintance, before definitely engaging fresh hands, gave them a dinner, and watched their appetite. If a man ate his food with relish, that suited him well; but if a fellow played with his knife, fork, and spoon, and only looked at his victuals with indifferent eyes, that candidate was refused acceptance; because, as the master said, if he could not eat, he could not work. The same test, I believe, has been employed in England by a railway contractor in his choice of navvies.

Jacques Bonhomme, in the North, has a breakfast of bread and pork lard—on Fridays, butter. For drink, so-called tea, containing little or none of the Chinese herb, but boiled milk and water flavoured with a pinch of cinnamon, or a few black-currant or other leaves; or, perhaps, he has "lait battu," butter-milk, a favourite light and agreeable beverage. At noon, or half-past at latest, he dines off soup—such as English labourers would consider very poor broth—salt pork, potatoes, haricots, or salad, and inexhaustible bread. Roast meat but rarely appears at table. On days when meat is not allowed, it is replaced by hard eggs, if not too dear at the time. A glass or two of beer, or small cider—called "boisson" in Normandy—and piquette, or small wine, in wine-growing departments, completes the repast. For the afternoon, there is the above-mentioned collation. Supper mostly consists of soup and bread.

In large farms, where several labourers are employed, the men dine first, at a separate table, in the presence of the master or the mistress, who see that they are properly served. When they rise to leave, the family dine, with probably some addition to the bill of fare. In small holdings, where the owner or the occupier employs only an extra hand or two, they all sit down to table together, and so take their share of little indulgences, such as a few bunches of currants, a pear, a cup of coffee, and a "canard," or duck, namely, a lump of sugar dipped in eau-de-vie.

While on this topic it would be a culpable omission to forget either *soupe maigre*—soup innocent of meat—for Fridays, or *soupe aux choux*, cabbage soup.

Soupe maigre, simple enough to make, still requires care to prevent its burning. All sorts of available vegetables, chopped fine; dried haricots previously steeped; bread; a bit of butter; and cooked sorrel—whose flavour should predominate—are thrown into boiling water and frequently stirred till all is tender and thoroughly mingled. No garden, whether belonging to great people or small, is complete without a handsome bed of that excellent antiscorbutic and relisher of insipid viands, the broad-leaved sorrel, "*oseille de Belleville*."

For cabbage soup, "*soupe aux choux*," shred a well-hearted cabbage across in slices; wash them scrupulously. Set your boiler on the fire with cold water and a nice piece of salt pork in it. When it boils, throw in the cabbage and let it simmer gently till both are cooked. Take out the pork, to be served after the soup. Put slices of bread into your tureen, and pour over them the boilings with the cabbage. A tall-growing, yellow-leaved variety of cabbage, which does not form a heart, is cultivated for soup-making in spring, when hearted-cabbage is no longer to be had.

So popular is this humble mess of potage that cabbage-soup is to the expatriated French peasant, and also to people in a higher social position, what the "*ranz-des-vaches*" is to the Swiss abroad. A valued friend—the captain of a French frigate stationed off Madagascar, complaining of the bad quality and the scarcity of fresh provisions, as well as of the vapour-bath climate—from the effects of which, after returning home, he died—wrote to me: "Oh, how I should enjoy the sight of snow, or the taste of a nice plate of cabbage-soup!"

The genuine French "*pot-au-feu*," made with a piece of salt pork, a piece of fresh beef, and Henry the Fourth's historical hen in the soup-kettle, is a luxury not too frequently indulged in.

The First of December, Saint Eloy's day, is the farmers', and also the blacksmiths' fête. In the morning, Jacques Bonhomme puts on his Sunday clothes, and he and his fellows, in procession, bear on their shoulders the large ornamented loaf or cake, contributed in turn by the principal cultivators of the parish, to be blessed at church and converted into "*pain bénit*,"

which is afterwards distributed to favoured friends and patrons. The loaf is escorted by rustic music, whose strains do not change from generation to generation. After mass, only a short interval separates them from the dinner given by the master, which comprises a variety of unwonted good things, finished off with a gloria, that is, coffee, with a little—sometimes a fair quantity of—brandy in it. The day's amusements wind up with a ball, beginning early, and ending late, at which evening full-dress, though not forbidden, would greatly astonish the assembled dancers, who would never have seen such a thing in all their lives.

When the obligatory one year's, or the nominal five years' service has been duly performed, Jacques has still to be called out twice, after two years' interval, for twenty-eight days' exercise each time, and again, later on, for thirteen days. This is deemed necessary, to prevent Jacques from forgetting how to handle a gun, or to obey the word of command. But it is a vexatious regulation for fathers of families, professional men, and people of business in general. It is tempered by sending them to a garrison as near as may be to their homes, and by permissions of absence for a day or so, as often as military requirements allow.

After his two twenty-eight days' and his one thirteen days' exercise to refresh his memory, his country has no further claim on Jacques Bonhomme; he is free to do as he pleases, in time of peace, to all intents and purposes, though he is held to belong to the army up to forty years of age. But let war break out, he, and every one else capable of bearing arms, will be sent to the front, without mercy or consideration for widowed mothers, or innocent and helpless wives and children. The horrors and miseries of war are not confined to the battle-field.

When Jacques comes home for good, he usually resumes, if in the country, his agricultural pursuits; if in town, his shoemaking, tailoring, or other handicraft. Rarely does he consent to remain under arms, now that he can no longer sell himself as a substitute. Men who adopt the military profession permanently, mostly belong to a somewhat superior class, though exceptions are far from uncommon. A supply of good non-commissioned officers is what the French army finds least easy to obtain.

Undoubtedly, the travel and the change of surroundings open Jacques's mind to a wonderful extent. He acquires a happy

aptitude for turning his hand to anything. He perceives that the world contains other objects and ideas besides those within the horizon of his village steeple; still, travelling by railway, and often by night, he sees less of France than when the stages were performed on foot; and old soldiers are not slow to boast of their superior topographical knowledge. But in a new garrison, after a few days' looking about him, Jacques soon makes himself at home, and finds acquaintance, sometimes friendships, there. Occasionally, when his time of service is finished, instead of singing "The girl I left behind me," he returns, marries her, and settles down, infusing fresh blood into the town where he had arrived as an absolute stranger.

WITH COMPOUND INTEREST.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.
By LUCIE WALKER.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Monsieur di Loscagno, making his farewells the morning after his aunt's fête, heard that Ursula was too unwell to see him, that she was, in fact, confined to her bed by the consequences of the previous day's drenching, he commended the wisdom of what he supposed to be a feminine stratagem for the purpose of avoiding the embarrassment of another meeting, after the painful explanation which had taken place between them.

"She was a foolish child," he said to his aunt, when she told him that Ursula was suffering, "she should have hurried in at the first approach of the storm; especially as she appears to be so susceptible to the influence of electric disturbances as to faint with fright."

But the feverish attack was not feigned.

While Monsieur di Loscagno, on his way to Lyons, was devoting his attention to planning out the diplomatic conduct which he would have to follow during the next few days, her illness was gaining in intensity, till, by the evening, she was delirious, and Madame di Loscagno—who had constituted herself head nurse—was learning, to her great dismay, that the real source of the evil lay deeper than the terror induced by the storm or the results of a wetting. She was, however, less astonished at the part René's name played in these involuntary confessions, than at the wails of regret with which Ursula reviewed a more dis-

tant past. She had partly suspected that her nephew had carried flirtation to a dangerous point with her pretty protégée; she had done what she could to ward off the danger; but that Ursula should consider, as she evidently did, that she was suffering a well-merited punishment, that she could perpetually call on Felix for forgiveness, and implore him to be true to her in her misery, was a totally new revelation to the Baroness.

"She will recover, I have no doubt," said the doctor; "she is young and strong, and youth and strength die hard. But I see from this violent delirium, of which I do not understand a word, that her mind is more sick than her body; that she is suffering more from a mental than from a physical shock. Depend upon it, Madame la Baronne, her fainting fit in the garden was not due to her fear of thunder. Can you not relieve her sufferings by sending for one or the other of these people on whom she calls so piteously? For her mother? Well, yes, if you fear the responsibility of curing her; otherwise, I tell you, there is no immediate danger."

But Madame di Loscagno did fear the responsibility, and so it came to pass a few days later that a carriage drove up to the Villa Estella, from which Mrs. Armitage and Felix Martin descended, and were met by the Baroness on the threshold. The pleasant old face and bright eyes were worn and dimmed, as if with long watching; but they were no longer sad or anxious.

"Welcome to you both after your long, hurried journey," she said, taking a hand of each of her guests. "I am delighted that you are come to find her better. When I wrote to you she was delirious; she knew no one. She fancied you were already here. Her chief cry was for Monsieur Felix. She seemed to have some great matter to speak with him about; but the day before yesterday the fever left her, she slept quietly, and already her strength is returning. She knows you are coming; she was the first to hear your carriage-wheels. Will you come to her at once? You must not blame me, madame," she continued to Mrs. Armitage, "for what Ursula has suffered. I could not have averted it, and, perhaps, it will bear its fruit of happiness for you all."

The next moment Ursula was in her mother's arms, and the hand which she held out to Felix was clasped in both of his.

"Felix," she said, "oh, Felix, how glad I am to see you again! You must have

forgiven me; you must care for me still, or you would not have come."

And Martin, whose eyes clouded over unaccountably as he heard these welcome words, bent down and whispered:

"We said we would forgive and forget, did we not, dearest?"

Then he bent lower and kissed her pale forehead, and looked into her eyes for a moment, then turned and went away out of the room. He wanted nothing better than to be alone with the joy that had come to him after his long pain.

An hour or two afterwards, when Ursula had sunk to sleep, Madame di Loscagno came softly into the room.

"Ah, she is sleeping, I see," she whispered; "then my congratulations must wait till she awakes. I have been talking with Monsieur Felix. I disturbed him in the seventh heaven of delight, and heard all the story. 'Poor fellow,' and here the old lady gave her shoulders a commiserating shrug, "I'm sorry to think he has to work so hard for such a small competence. You do not think you are being imprudent?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Armitage, emphatically. "If the matter rested with me—so great is my confidence in him—he might marry her as soon as she is strong enough to walk up the church; but, unfortunately for him, Mr. Armitage will not allow me to decide the matter."

"Ah!" said the old lady, pensively, "Monsieur Felix mentioned that he was not sure of Mr. Armitage's consent. How is that?"

"It is a long story," replied Mrs. Armitage, wearily. "It is no fault of Felix's; it is not even his poverty. Mr. Armitage is not just towards him. I do not know how it will end."

"You do not know how it will end; but I do, my dear Mrs. Armitage; we must make it end well. Mr. Armitage and I are great friends, as you know. I shall use arguments which he will not be able to resist. Monsieur Felix has won my heart. I shall be an excellent special pleader for him. Now you must come and rest; I will take your place by Ursula when I have shown you your room. It is not quite a guest-chamber that I have given you. I thought you would like best to be quite close to the child." As she spoke she led the way into an adjoining room. "You have the same view as Ursula," she went on; but while she turned to the window and began to arrange the *jalousie*, Mrs. Armitage, after a hasty

glance round the room, sank down with a faint cry upon the sofa.

"Ah!" cried the Baroness, "I knew you were tired. I saw it in your face, though you bore up so well. Here, let me put this eau-de-Cologne on your head, and help you to lie down. There, there, do not try to stand. I will get you all you want."

"It is not the fatigue," said Mrs. Armitage, in a trembling voice; "I was startled. It seemed so wonderful to see that portrait here in your house." And she pointed to a portrait which hung opposite, which represented a man, past his first youth, with striking features, who looked down on her with large, winning eyes.

"Is it then a portrait of some one whom you knew?" asked Madame di Loscagno, and her voice had in it a shade of incredulity.

"It is a face so familiar to me," replied Mrs. Armitage, rising and going close to the picture, "that after twenty years I have not forgotten it in the least."

"After twenty years! Ah, then, you are certainly mistaken. It is some striking resemblance which has deceived you. That is the portrait of my first husband."

"Of your first husband!" cried Mrs. Armitage. "Is it possible you were the wife—"

"But," continued the Baroness, "as I was about to tell you, my husband and my only child were drowned, five-and-twenty years ago, off the Breton coast."

"Madame," said Mrs. Armitage, firmly, "you are, of course, the best authority on a matter which so nearly concerns yourself; nevertheless, I can prove to you that your husband died not more than twenty years ago, and that I sat by his death-bed."

"But," said Madame di Loscagno, "I tell you my husband was drowned five years before the time you speak of. His empty boat was driven ashore. I had nothing to lay in the grave. The fishermen told me it was no unusual thing for bodies to be carried out to sea by one of the many currents of the coast. And after all, what will it profit us to prove that he escaped from the sea and did not come back to me? If you told me he was still alive, I would listen to you; but it comes to the same thing in the end."

"No, Madame," said Mrs. Armitage, solemnly, "it does not. For the man whom I maintain to have been the original of that picture, was the father of my adopted son, Felix Martin."

Madame di Loscagno seized her com-

panion's hands, and looked into her face with wild, eager eyes.

"Take care," she said; "take care of what you tell me. I have grown old before my time with the trouble that I bore when I was young. You will kill me now if you raise a hope which you cannot justify. Tell me all there is to tell. I must try and judge if it be true."

"I knew," replied Mrs. Armitage, "that Mr. Martin did not use his own name. He told me a great deal of his past history, for he professed a warm friendship for me—a friendship which annoyed Mr. Armitage, and which is at the root of his prejudice against Felix."

"Go on," said Madame di Loscagno, feverishly. "And was there anything in the past history of this friend of yours relating to a rash, runaway marriage, and its consequences?"

"That marriage was the chief incident of the history. He told me that it turned out very unhappily. He accepted no part of the blame as his share. But I do not think I believed him. I knew him too well for that; and I honestly pitied the woman who had adored him, and whom he had deserted."

"We were both to blame," replied the Baroness. "I was the most to be pitied, for my love outlived his."

"So I understood," went on Mrs. Armitage. "And at length, when his bondage became unbearable, he determined on a desperate plan of escape. His little son, to whom he was blindly devoted, he took with him. The empty boat was only a blind to set you morally free, and to check search. He told me no names; and sometimes I used to wonder whether the story were really true, or if it were only one of the many romances he used to weave to engage my interest in him. When he was seized with the illness which proved fatal to him, he sent for me. I reached his death-bed in time to accept the charge of his little Felix, but not to hear any disclosures by which I could trace out the child's identity. If my story requires corroboration—as you may well feel it does—Felix can show you a locket which he wears, containing two miniatures: one of his father, and one of a lady whom I have always supposed to be his mother. This locket was the only memento of any kind found among Mr. Martin's effects, when they were sold at Homburg twenty years ago to pay his hotel bill."

The Baroness was lying back in her

chair, her eyes were closed, and her face was working with emotion.

"Ah me!" she cried, when Mrs. Armitage had finished; "strange as it is, it will be true after all; and I have a son who is not a little dead baby. No, no, I'm not going to faint; my heart is beating at double rate, that is all. I am going to find my son, and to tell him all myself. Let me go alone. Afterwards, I shall thank you for all you have done for him, and for giving him back to me. Just now I cannot find words."

A few minutes after, Felix, walking to and fro along a shady garden-path, was suddenly accosted by his hostess, whose agitated face showed signs of recent tears.

"Madame," he cried, "she has had a relapse. I feared it was all too good to be true."

"No," said Madame di Loscagno, making a great effort to speak calmly, "she is not worse, and the best of news is not too good to be true to-day. Your thoughts are full of your love and your new-found happiness, and here comes an old woman and breaks in upon your reverie, and takes your hands and looks into your eyes as if she were your oldest, most familiar friend, and, as she looks, she sees nothing but a happiness which she can neither increase nor diminish for you. Yet, will you believe her, if she says that your heart does not beat so wildly and triumphantly as hers; that your love, which has come back to you from the brink of the grave, is as nothing to hers which has come back to life after it had lain among the dead for long years! I am talking riddles. Ah, it is not so easy to put it plainly. See, here, on your watch-chain you wear a little old-fashioned medallion. I open it. Are you surprised that I know the curious trick of its ancient spring? Here is a face which yours faintly resembles. It is your father's face, is it not? You see I have guessed rightly. And here is another face. The hair is brown and full; there are no wrinkles on the brow; the eyes are bright; the cheeks are round; the lips smile. It is your mother. No doubt she has changed since this was her likeness; she has suffered, perhaps; she has mourned and repented for what she could not undo, more than for what she had done?"

"I do not know," said Felix, gravely. "I left her when I was only four years old. Mrs. Armitage has been the only mother I have known."

"It is I who tell you she has done all this," went on the Baroness. "I tell you, I do not ask you. Listen, Felix. Long ago, there was a dark page written in my history. I was headstrong and rebellious; I insisted on choosing my own life, and I made a bad choice. I gave away all the love I had to give; and I gave it unwisely. When I found out how foolish I had been, I could not leave off loving. I could only begin suffering. Then, when things got to the worst, my husband—for whom I had given up my home and all my friends—went away and left me, and robbed me of my only child. He is dead now, I will not say anything against him; least of all to you. Felix, do you understand? Mrs. Armitage has been the only mother I have known; but the mother who has you has mourned for you and longed for you every day of her long, lonely life, and to-day God has brought you back to her."

A few weeks later, when Ursula was strong again, there were festivities at the Villa Estella far more brilliant than any which had been celebrated there in many days, at which festivities the Baroness presented to all her friends and neighbours the son whom, for so many years, she had believed dead, and the love of his boyhood now his affianced wife—Ursula Armitage.

Mr. Armitage was not present on the occasion. Long after the great event had transpired, the news thereof reached far out in the wilds of Colorado, where he was busily investigating some land, and to contain rich nitrates, with a view to purchasing it for a would-be speculation.

Nor was Monsieur le Baron di Loscagno one of those who shared in the rejoicing. He was just then busily engaged in the formalities which immediately preceded his marriage with the well-dowered daughter of the silk-weaver. Nor did he extend a cordial hand of welcome to his new-found cousin-in-law, whom he considered rather in the light of a hindrance to his own pecuniary prospects than as an advantageous addition to his connexions. Madame di Loscagno comforted him, however, for his consolation, that she has set him down for a handsome son-in-law, her new will, adding, that she hoped he will not come into his inheritance until she has seen her grandson Felix grow to manhood, by way of compensation for what she was robbed of earlier in life.

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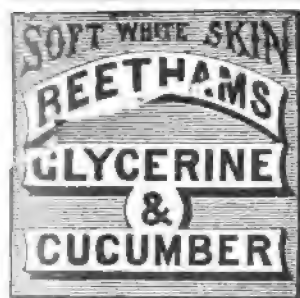
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LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

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CHAPTER II. KEEPING VIGIL.

THE night has deepened to a murky darkness. The flame of the lamp above the prison gateway is beaten, shuddering, from side to side by the wind that has risen to a heavy gale; rain, that stings and bites, plashing on the pavement and then rebounding with its own violence, makes it a hard time for travellers; and the storm, having followed hard on the heels of a fine and quiet evening, has taken people by surprise. A policeman saunters along slowly and calmly, as though it were a summer night, and rain and wind were mere matters of the imagination.

His beat lies near and around the prison, and he is one used to prison ways, and apt to hurriedly "move on" any skulker who may see fit to hang about the postern. It is, indeed, a shock to him, and brings him pretty smartly to a standstill to see that postern—usually so jealously closed at that late hour—open in a furtive kind of way, as if somehow ashamed of itself and conscious of a dereliction from the straight path of duty, to see the head of George Bramble protrude—also furtively—into the wind and the rain; and, still further, to see a slight, female figure, wrapped in a long, dark cloak, step through the gateway that shuts promptly behind her, and leaves her to do battle with the storm as best she may.

Forlorn and solitary enough looks this woman, as she wrestles a moment with the cloak that has suddenly taken to en-

wrapping her like a winding-sheet and impeding her progress. She succeeds in loosening the clinging folds, and then it bellies out behind her, threatening to throw her backwards, and has to be caught and held tightly across her breast.

By this time the policeman is by her side, and has turned his bull's-eye lantern upon her. The light is blurred and dimmed by the rain upon its round glass disc; but for all that he can see the woman's face, and it seems to be familiar to him. It is pale and wan, and across the dark parted hair, lies the pitiful symbol of widowhood.

The policeman, standing right in the woman's pathway, pulls a narrow leather-bound book from under his cape, while his lantern, set down upon the flags, looks like a lighthouse in a shallow sea; but in an instant the woman has hold of his arm, and her white face is uplifted to his.

"No—no," she says, panting as she speaks, "don't report George; don't report me. It's for no harm I've broke rule and come out so late. There's a des'put need for me to be let out; a sorry, des'put need, or George wouldna' have broke rule. I don't look like a woman as is after mischief, do I? I'm too sorrow-laden to be after any harmful ways. Anybody may see that. I'm the widow of him as was—hung for murder here a month or two back. 'Tain't likely I'd come out like this if there wasn't a des'put need. I'm that hasted that every minute seems like an hour. Don't go for to keep me."

Her limp black skirts are blown against his legs; her eyes are wild; her lips shake as she speaks. The man has a wife and children at home. He puts the book back under his cape, and, stooping to lift his lantern, bids the night-bird spread her wings and fly.

"Go your ways," he says, gruffly, "and Heaven help you, my lass, for it's a fear-some night!"

With a low, incoherent cry she speeds along: the wind flutters her akirts, and the cloak seems hard to manage. He can hear her feet splash in the deep pools and puddles; he can see her, wraith-like, in the whirl and mist, going further and further down the dark street; see her, intermittently, as she passes this wind-shaken flicker of lamplight or that. Now he can see her no more.

"That's a rum go," he mutters gruffly to himself, as he sets off once more on his rounds. "She's a plucky one, she is, and after no mischief, not she! I'll take my dick o' that. I'm glad the rain's slackened a bit, poor lass, for her sake! Well, now! fancy having her man hanged, and havin' to tell t' little 'uns when they grow to be big 'uns."

He goes on in silence, taking the opposite way to that in which the white-faced woman in shabby, flitting black garments has disappeared.

But he cannot dismiss her from his mind. He turns, stands, gazes eagerly ahead, as though he half expected to see the slight figure still doing grievous battle with wind and rain.

No, the street is empty: a long length of shining flagstones, with flickering gas-lamps at intervals, accentuating the darkness in between.

It is not, however, silent; for, now far, now near, from the street that runs cross-wise just at the spot where Bessy was lost to view, comes the sound of that ghastly cry familiar to every Londoner as one of the most unpleasant "voices of the night." How weird does it sound, the cry of the news-vendor making unholy profit by appealing to one of the worst passions of humanity—the craving to hear some new horror, and gloat over its every detail!

"Ter-ri-ble tra-ge-dy! Ter-ri-ble tra-ge-dy!"

Now it comes nearer, now stops, now rings out again.

"Ter-ri-ble tra-ge-dy!"

"Drat the man," grumbles the policeman, pacing moodily on, and still thinking of the woman who came through the postern at such an hour, "drat the man and his bawling! Ain't there tragedies enough looked up in that there place, without him bringing word of another to help the rest! Like enough it's a lie; but I hate the sound on't. I wish he were abed in

the casual ward, and his papers stuck atop o' the fire, that I do!"

Fainter and fainter grows the cry, till it sounds like an echo in the distance.

We are told that Sargon, the great Chaldean King, had a favourite malediction which he was wont to hurl at the heads of his enemies, that is, at the heads of those whom he specially hated.

It ran thus:

"May he sit bound at the feet of his foe!"

One has to think it well over before the full bitterness and malice of this pithy curse is realised.

To be helpless—tied and bound—unable to stir hand or foot, in the presence of one who hates you; to feel the iron enter into your soul, and for Fate to say: "You can do nothing—there is no remedy—you are helpless."

It was thus with Louis Draycott, as, from beneath her manacled hands, the narrow eyes of Rebecca, his wife, peered into his own—the eyes he had believed to be long since closed in death, and shrouded for ever from the light of the sun.

The blow had been terrible—the shock unspeakable. But the man was no coward; the manliest, truest courage was ingrained in him, and did not fail him even in such a supreme moment as that of this fatal and most unlooked-for meeting.

After that one bitter moment of recognition, he gathered himself together, and, by what seemed a miracle of fortitude to those looking on, in reply to the torrent of jeers and mocking gibes poured out upon his devoted head by the woman before him, spoke to her calmly, and with a marvellous dignity and power.

"Stand back," he said, "and stop that jargon; it is contrary to rule, and will bring severe punishment upon you. I will listen to all you have to say, if you will speak quietly."

"You were always a cool hand," she said, not without a certain reluctant admiration in her tone.

Then she let fall her fettered hands with a sharp jangle, and stepped back to her place beside the cot.

"You're not going to deny that I'm your wife, are you?" said the woman, sullenly, cowed by his resolute aspect.

"Certainly not. You are my wife, Rebecca Fordyce Draycott, whom I believed to be dead."

The Matron, standing near—a quiet,

Quaker-like figure, in her grey dress and white apron—gave a little cry at this, and the two wardresses huddled up to her side in fear and trembling.

They had seen and heard many strange things in their prison life; but never, never anything like this! One remembered to have seen a play something the same, and been so thrilled by it, that she could not sleep all night. The other bethought her of the beautiful young lady whom old David had told them of—the lady whom the Chaplain was “sweet on,” who looked as if she were “made of chinay,” and had knelt by the old man’s bed, and “blest him wonderful.” What of her, now that this terrible woman claimed to be Mr. Draycott’s wife, and Mr. Draycott—

But here her train of thought was broken into, for the Chaplain spoke again:

“Have you the key of the wrist-chains, Mrs. Graham?”

The Matron drew the key from a long pouch, wherein many rattled, and held it out to him.

“Set her free,” he said, shortly, turning aside so as not to watch the process.

The Matron seemed to hesitate. The wardress, who had seen the play, spoke up, though trembling:

“She may do you a mischief, sir.”

“No, she will not.”

The turn of the key in the handcuffs made a grating sound; the chain clanked as the Matron set the strong, lithe hands free.

“Now,” said the Chaplain, “I will ask you all to leave me alone with—my wife.”

Blank looks passed between the three women, then the youngest wardress hid her face upon her hands, sobbing.

Every heart within those grim, dark walls loved him; every soul was drawn to him. It was a common saying among the prison staff that there had been none like him in the past, and would be none like him ever again, when the day came that he must part from them. Bitter, then, was it to those three trembling women to be told to quit the cell, and leave him alone with that unchained fury whom he called “his wife”; bitter to them to feel that in this dark and cruel hour they were helpless to be of any good to him.

They huddled together like frightened sheep, hesitating, unwilling, almost ready to defy him.

The woman seated on the cot watched them, quick-witted enough to take in the

position of things, hardened enough to find some amusement in it, too, since a harsh laugh broke from her lips as she looked from them to the Chaplain, and back again.

“Will you not do as I ask you?” said Louis Draycott, gently.

The Matron made a gesture with her hand, dismissing the other two. Then she went herself to the door, and stood there. Her face was white as milk; her mouth twitched as she spoke.

“You know the rule, sir,” she said, quaking.

“Yes. Go out—and—lock the door.”

The next moment the key turned and grated in the lock.

They tell us that in women curiosity is a passion; and in each cell door was a spy-hole, the lid of which could be shifted by any one in the corridor; but it may be safely said that if the Chaplain had remained in the “remand” cell half the night, not a hand would have raised the disc, not an ear would have been strained to catch the echo of a word uttered there.

The wardress on duty took her place at the end of the gallery; the Matron spoke a word or two to Bessy, who still stitched by the flickering light, and Bessy, who had Bobby fast asleep upon her lap, rose with him in her arms, and followed the grey-gowned figure out of sight.

The “bad case” was quiet enough now. No sound of cry or mocking laughter broke the stillness; nothing save the sough of the wind, and now and again the sharp patter of the rain on the skylight overhead.

When the time came for the wardress to go her last rounds, before retiring for the night, a slight tap at the door of the remand cell warned her to unlock the door. This she did, trembling still, and, at sight of the Chaplain crossing the threshold, and stepping out into the corridor, was ready, as she said afterwards, to “fall into a swoon,” so changed and drawn was his kindly face; but he spoke as gently as was his wont, and when he saw she could not restrain her tears, laid his hand a moment on her shoulder.

“She will be quiet enough now,” he said.

Ten minutes later all lights were out, and the riotous prisoner lay like a log upon her cot, her hard bright eyes staring into the darkness, her breath coming fitfully, as that of one who longs to weep, yet will not let the “climbing sorrow” have its way.

Meanwhile, Louis Draycott has passed down the gallery, crossed the covered way that separates the women's side of the prison from the men's, and, walking slowly and wearily, like one who has journeyed far and can scarce reach the bourne for which he is bound, gained his own quarters. He left that quiet room one man, he enters it another.

There, on the table, lies his open diary; beside it, the pen he laid down when he had traced there sweet and precious words of hope and love. His little reading lamp, with the shade Aunt Dacie's deft fingers had made and painted in cunning pattern of field flowers as a "surprise" for him, stands by the book, casting a soft light upon its record.

He is dazed, bewildered, faint, too, now that the need for immediate action is over.

Passing his hand across his brow, he staggers a moment, then, steadying himself by a mighty effort, reaches the low lounge chair by the fire, and there sinks exhausted. There is no one to comfort him, no one to tend him.

All at once he becomes conscious of a few drooping flowers that lie against the breast of his coat. They are violets, placed there by Mazie's hand only a few hours ago. Then they were fresh and fair; now they are drooping and broken like the hopes they well may symbolise. He presses them madly to his lips, then, still clasping them in his hand, falls into utter stillness.

The night grows cold; the fire dies out—grows to a heap of dull, grey ashes, with only a creeping sparkle here and there. The dark head is thrown back against the chair; the eyes that have looked so tenderly on the sufferings of others, look dim and hollow as though hours had done the work of years, and stolen all their youth, and light, and hope.

So far, the stricken man has not felt much. He has been numbed; he has been like the creature whom a dream mocks with the semblance of a joy or a pain that dazes, but does not convince. It all seems so unreal—himself the most unreal of all. If he had really lost Mazie; if the beautiful past were dead in very truth, slain by the hand of a cruel fate, could he be sitting here, still and silent, without moan or cry?

Surely he was full of fancies to-night. He had fancied he heard the postern open and shut at an hour no such thing could be; he had fancied he heard Mazie singing ever so soft and low; he had even caught

—always in his fancy—the words of the song she sang: "Herz mein Herz—warum so trübe!"

His brain was going through the painful process that is inevitable after a dire and terrible shock; mingling fancy with reality, but gradually awakening to a sense of the reality of things all through.

The little prison sparrows outside—merry little creatures, in spite of their grim abode—begin to sing the best matins they know—a series of short, sharp chirpings that mean the pale dawn is not far off. The lamp has burnt low for lack of oil; the gas shows a sickly flare in the growing light; and, as though the coming of the day were bringing mental as well as actual light, the solitary watcher suddenly casts off the fever of dull dreamings, and finds himself face to face with a naked and hideous reality.

He springs to his feet—his feet so numbed they scarce can bear him—he throws up his arms in an abandonment of despair.

"My God!" he cries, "My God! how can I tell her?"

His own sorrow, his own agony of loss, what does that count beside the thought of his darling's pain? He does not cry: "How can I bear it?" but only: "How can I tell her? How can I wound the gentle heart that loves me?"

Then a sense of utter loneliness comes upon him—the loneliness of the years that are coming over shadows him—the years without the clinging of his darling's arms about his neck, without the touch of her lips on his, without the clasp of her hand, without the sight of her face.

For he knows that it must come to this.

All this must be set aside. Against this verdict there was no appeal. If they had loved each other in silence and submission, if there had always been some barrier between them from the first that allowed of loyalty and tenderness, yet forbade hope, things might have been different.

But to have been plighted lovers, to have held Mazie in his arms, his promised wife, to have looked forward to that life together which even in anticipation had seemed so sweet a thing, and then to have to fall back into the old relations, holding no promise of a day to come! He knew that to put a woman through such an ordeal was to see her droop and die; he knew that for both it would prove a strain too great for human hearts to bear.

This man was one to face all things unflinchingly; and now he knew that he must leave her, this dear love of his; that he must rend her, not from his heart—that could never be—but from his life.

They would both find plenty of work to do in the world, though they should walk for ever "under altered skies," he was sure of that; sure, even in the midst of this awful anguish of desolation.

Just as the action of the sea rounds a jagged stone into perfect symmetry and smoothness, so does sorrow mould a character, softening every angle. Louis Draycott had suffered bitterly in the past, and sorrow had taught him how to suffer in the noblest way. Now he thought but little of his own pain, his own loss; prayed but scant prayers for himself. Thoughts and prayers, pity and longing were all for her.

The silence grows oppressive to him. He paces from end to end of the room, that looks grey and ghastly in the grey dawning. He is glad of the sound of the clock that ticks upon the mantelshelf; glad of the sooty sparrows that chirp outside his window.

The day is coming, the day that brings with it an ordeal almost too terrible to be faced.

See, he is kneeling now before the open book that lies upon his table, where the lamp has burnt itself out. His face is hidden on his arms; but he is not weeping. No sob shakes that bowed form, no tear comes to soften the burning of the eyes, the throbbing of the aching brow.

Oh, ghastly light of day, creeping in through the high, narrow window, touching the dark head, the kneeling form, the hands that clench upon what they touch, as though to find some help and stay in things inanimate, surely there are few sadder sights in all the great and crowded city this morning, than the one your pale grey beams illumine in this prison chamber!

Brighter and brighter grows the dawning. The storm of the night has passed. The scud has drifted elsewhere. There is a faint pale rose in the east, and then, to Louis Draycott, comes the summons no faithful priest can refuse to hear.

There is a low, hurried knocking at the door, which opens before there is time to bid the intruder enter, and George Bramble, looking white and scared, stands within the threshold.

Now, there are strange "notions" abroad in the prison as to the "ways" of the Chaplain; and George is hardly surprised to find him on his knees, even at this early hour of the morning; but, as Mr. Draycott rises, and stands supporting himself against the table, George grows whiter and more scared-looking than before. There was not a warder or wardress in all the prison who did not know the story of what had happened in the remand cell before "lights out" the previous night. But the tale had not yet reached the porter's lodge, and so George came quickly to the conclusion that sudden illness had fallen upon Mr. Draycott, and given him such a strange, unfamiliar look; made him so red-eyed and haggard, so dull and helpless-looking.

"I beg pardon, sir, for coming in so rash—but—please, sir, father's took for death, and askin' for you."

It was marvellous how the man gathered himself together; how, at the call of duty, he shook off the lethargy that had numbed him, the sense of despair that had gathered curdling about his heart.

"Go back to him," he said. "I will follow you in a moment."

And before George reached the door of the lodge, he heard the steady, swinging step they all knew so well, ringing clearly on the slate floor of the long corridor.

THE TITLE OF "REVEREND."

FOR my part, being untitled, I esteem the titled in no measure above the untitled. It is all one whether the man be a Right Honourable, a Duke, a General, a Deputy-Assistant Chamberlain, the High-Born Shirt-Bearer of a Crown Prince, a Reverend Doctor of Divinity, or a plain John Jones. To be sure, like the rest of the world, on occasion, I tender to each and all of these dignitaries, the meed of superficial respect that their prefix claims for them. But this phantasm of respect is confined to their titles.

Of course, if the title be won by an exercise of notable abilities, I am not unwilling to bow civilly to the respective intellects which deserve praise. Upon these, indeed, the titles may be said to be hung, like a ribbon round a fair neck. But the head is no credible augur of the heart. Rather, I am prone to agree with Jean Paul that "the warmest hearts frequently have only a grain of brain or understand-

ing." The heart is the only thing really respectable in a man. But the heart does its work in secret. Only the work of the brain—evidence of which all eyes may see—is rewarded with titles. The odd inference is, therefore, that men with titles should actually be esteemed less than other men.

Of all current titles, none is so common and none so responsible as that of "Reverend." It is a title otherwise than that of Doctor, which medical men prefix to their names. The latter may be termed distinctive merely; however honourable in fact. But the person who receives the title of "Reverend" is suddenly translated from the lay order of men. He is, henceforth, on a plane apart from us. We, sunk in a stupor of worldliness, see him step upwards, as it were, into a sphere of which we may know little or nothing. Henceforth he is less to us than he was, however much he may persist in declaring that life and its pleasures are as dear to him as ever they were. With one hand he touches the angels. It seems to us, of the undignified lalty, incongruous that with the other hand he should continue to touch gross beings of clay like ourselves, and continue to grasp at delights which appear to belong to us as exclusively as the more ethereal pleasures appertain to him.

Do men who take orders look at the matter thus? Not wholly, it is probable. At the outset they commonly feel a little abashed at the thought of their presumption, and, withal, somewhat puffed up with a sense of their own importance, when they realise where they stand in relation to other men. Thus their pride counterpoises their shame; and so they soon acquire new equanimity. Both the pride and the shame are natural enough, and both, of course, speedily disappear. It is a wrench to some men to find that they have ascended into a zone of life away from the majority of their fellows. But they ought not to regret it.

For the most part, shall we say, they accept the higher pleasures of their spiritual life, and the joys beyond price which reward those who devote their lives to others.

The trimmers between two worlds, who, while assuring themselves of a blissful eternity, go to the theatres, hunt, shoot, travel, dance, make love, and who, in short, also pluck every flower in this world's meadows, are not so numerous as of yore; but they still exist.

On the other hand, there is certainly

something to be said in favour of the standpoint of the modern parson, who assumes to personate the muscular Christian of romance, and the Jesuit to whom all the mazy ways of the world are open: both in one individual. Such a clergyman may well, ere he attain his spiritual majority, be able to play various parts in the drama of life. He may plead that it is advisable to have this faculty, that, unless he can drink with the wine-bibber, make a creditable fourth at whist, put his horse at a five-barred gate to the music of a Tally ho! in company with squires and their daughters, row against a lifeboat man, argue with equal ease in bar-rooms, Exeter Halls, and the hives of unbelievers, and parley with thieves in their own exclusive lingo, unless, in brief, he can be all things to all men, he fails to be the power for good that he believes he can be.

This is excellent, theoretically. The anxious priest of this type may readily, and in a most plausible manner, persuade himself that, by living the life of a man of the world, he is mortifying his spiritual affections. It is nothing in opposition if he find the theatre most attractive, the gaiety of the paddock at Epsom contagious, and the whisky he drinks in luxurious smoking-rooms a subtle sapper of his virtuous intentions. It is all experience; and, as such, it will all be turned to account—some day.

Really, we cannot do better than look to the past, if we want an informing side-light upon our conduct in the present. We must never forget that ours is a "revolving" world, that our dilemmas are dilemmas which have occurred before, and, in fact, do but recur with us; and that certain effects follow certain actions. The Jesuits ought to be a finger-post of warning for our day; though one knows that it is quite the fashion with some people to exhaust their powers of eulogy upon the organisation which began with Loyola. If only the census could give us in tabular form a record of the many persons who began manhood with the serious title of "Reverend," with an adequate sense of the responsibility that attended the title, but with a lurking love for the earthly side of life such as marred their ideals, and made them sophistical with their souls—a record, I say, of the clergy who thus "started fair," but by-and-by went astray down this fatal channel or that, or struck on this or that rock of iniquity which

they had hoped to blast from the spacious sea of worldliness, the census would then be of increased utility, and cruelly romantic.

It was a singular little autobiography that Sydney Smith sent to a magazine, when he was requested by the editor to give a few particulars about himself. Like some hundreds of other young men who, year by year, pass under the Bishop's hands, he had been ordained a Christian minister; he had served as such for fifty years; and in the eighth decade of his life the following are what he thought the salient and more noteworthy features of his character.

"I am living," he says, "among the best society in the metropolis, and at ease in my circumstances; in tolerable health, a mild Whig, a tolerating churchman, and much given to talking, laughing, and noise. I dine with the rich in London, and physic the poor in the country; passing from the saucers of Dives to the sores of Lazarus. I am, upon the whole, a happy man; have found the world an entertaining world, and am thankful to Providence for the part allotted to me in it."

Supposing a daily press had been established two thousand years ago (in truth a terrible fancy!), and Saint Peter had been interviewed, or requisitioned in like manner, towards the end of his ministry, and of course long before his canonisation, how would he have expressed his autobiography?

As briefly as Sydney Smith, may be; but surely in different fashion. Peter, the fisherman, and the Reverend Sydney Smith, or the "Reverend" anybody would not, I fear, have very much in common with each other. You see, in the young days of Christianity, the title of "Reverend" was not. Only when the Church grew to a hierarchy, with ambitions of its own, no way dissimilar in kind from the ambitions of men of the world; only then were titles instituted, with their long tails of delightful some significance.

Is the notion that has often come to me, that our clergy might become more truly reverend were they shorn of their conventional title of "Reverend," so very heterodox and uncivil? In the present state of affairs, we are more apt to revere—in no very exclusive sense of the word—what is venerated rather than what is genuinely venerable. But if each divine were forced to show himself worthy of veneration before he were venerated, we should have fewer of those parsons among us who may be said to give the enemies

of the Church cause to blaspheme. Such a disendowment of customary titles is not so unreasonable as it may seem. There are people who say that by disestablishment the Church will become newly energised. Surely with as much reason we may affirm that if individuals are put upon their mettle, and made to work for what their predecessors have received by mere inheritance, it will be better for them.

Only the other day, I heard a young Dissenting Minister, who had gone through the usual ministerial course which qualified him to ascend a pulpit, repudiate the title of "Reverend." "I do wish people would not write letters addressing me as 'Reverend.' I prefer to be plain Mr.," he said. Heaven only knows what his motive was in this remark. But it is probable that it was something otherwise than that he might be spared the trial of the clerical cut of clothes which some of our established parsons bewail rather bitterly.

The same man protested equally against the trick of lifting the hat to him in the street. He said he never felt more ashamed of himself, or more conscious of his own demerits, than when a man or a boy uncovered his head to him as a mark of respect. Perhaps he had in his mind at the time Whitfield's boy, "who was so vividly conscious of the presence of God, that he would generally walk the roads with his hat off." What did this spiritual-minded boy do, I wonder, when, in the heat of his reverent fervour, he met a minister of the Church, whether established or independent? He could not take off his scalp, to show further respect. But he could show that there are degrees of respect, as of other things; and, therefore, I dare say he would put his hat on his head, and only uncover again when the minister was hid by the hedge at the corner.

Unless I am mistaken, during the tumult of the Commonwealth era, there were often men who declined the prefix "Reverend," although they fulfilled all the regular duties of the clergy. But it could have been through no laudable promptings of humility that these eccentric shepherds of Christianity discarded the simple title for some such voluminous text of a Christian name, as "Break-their-bones-in-sunder," or "Feed-my-sheep." If one had to choose between the Reverend Peter Robinson, and Mr. Feed-my-sheep Simpkins, I think the preference would lie with the Reverend Peter Robinson.

We have considered the title of "Reverend" in the abstract. Briefly, something may now be said about the public and private life of those to whom this title assumes to give spiritual superiority over the rest of us.

I suppose the public life of the clergyman may well enough be epitomised by his words and demeanour in the pulpit. His sermons are his teaching, and his manner of delivery gives or does not give the stamp of sincerity to what he teaches.

Now, does the title of "Reverend" in any degree act as an afflatus upon the man who finds himself set a few yards or feet—according to the position of the pulpit—above the heads of his hungry congregation? If he accepts his exceeding responsibility as such, and never ceases to strive to realise that he must be reverend, then he justifies his title. But if he receives the title, at the outset of his clerical career, as a sufficing diploma, which will, so to speak, frank him through all his troubles, and be his certificate of character rather than the foundation-stone upon which he is to erect a character, then I fear he will be venerable neither in the pulpit nor out of it, and, therefore, more contemptible in the pulpit than anywhere else.

Nor will his sermons bring reverence even to a good man, with a serious sense of his title, if he does not take some thought of the manner of their delivery. "Preachers sent from God," says Spurgeon, whom we all know as no mean preacher, "are not musical-boxes, which, being once wound up, will play through their set tunes." There is very little of the inspired in sermons that begin with a "Firstly," after a due solid exordium, and end with a "Tenthly," and "In conclusion," followed by a precise peroration. As little acceptable is the thunderstorm of speech which keeps a congregation on a quiver until the sermon is over, when the deafened and nervous worshippers step homewards, delving in vain in their memories for a single treasure of thought or counsel as the residue of the riot. One is disposed to revere Dry-as-dust no more than the mere tempest-rouser.

Again, there is much in attitude that appeals to us of the world. The parson who stands much at his ease, with one hand on the red velvet cushion, and never takes his eyes off his "copy" or the particular corbel in the roof to which he is accustomed to preach, is as likely to gain

the sympathy and the veneration of the paper or the corbel as of his auditors. The latter, in such a case, have a fine justification for slumber, and some of them are sure early to perceive it.

Gesture is much also, as we learn from the theatre. Some object to gesture in the pulpit. The stage is the stage, and the pulpit is the pulpit, they say. But in the name of truth and sense, if gesture be permissible in a play, which has in view nothing more than an artistic entertainment of a number of pleasure-seekers, surely anything that gives emphasis to words designed to do the utmost for human beings that man can do, is not only permissible but desirable! I trow more souls have been made uneasy by pulpit action than by pulpit rhetoric. South and Stillingfleet were erudite preachers, skilled in the concatenation of sentences; but I warrant John Knox could do more in a minute of bodily movement than they in twenty sermons of the most elegant prose, each of the periods of which dovetailed perfectly into the headpiece of its successor.

Certainly, there is gesture and gesture. Neither a monkey nor an automaton would be very convincing in a pulpit. Sincerity must attend upon due energy, and then all things are possible—even the awakening of that spirit of reverence which Mr. Ruskin believes to be an innate and ineradicable part of our nature. The preacher must not

. . . coolly spout, and spout, and spout away,
In one weak, washy, everlasting flood,

with pump-like movement of the arm. Nor must he be as methodical as the Court preacher of the seventeenth century, of whom Ludovicus Cresollius writes: "When he turned himself to the left he spoke a few words, accompanied by a moderate gesture of the hand, then bending to the right he acted the same part over again; then back again to the left, and presently again to the right; almost at an equal and measured interval of time he worked himself up to his usual gesture, and went through his one kind of movement. You could compare him only to the blindfolded Babylonian oxen going forward, and turning back by the same path. I was so disgusted that I shut my eyes; but even so I could not get over the disagreeable impression of the speaker's manner."

Precisely. And, in the like predicament, when the eyes of sense are shut, there is no knowing how long the eyes of the

understanding may keep awake. And then the preacher may whistle for any tribute of veneration other than that which is due to the most ordinary of soporifica.

And, lastly, as touching the "Reverend" in the privacy of home life. Why is it that the parson is so often infelicitous within his parsonage, though revered like a being of a nobler sphere outside his own premises?

Ah! that is a question which demands a more expansive answer than this paper can admit. The priest is of heaven—or he ought to be; but the Vicar or Rector, who is the husband of a wife, and, consequently, the father of a family, is tied very fast to earth.

In truth, I am inclined to see in the wives of the clergy the bar to much feeling of reverence that the more kindly members of the outer world would not be averse, otherwise, to offer to the clergy. I do not say this in enmity to parsons' wives. Quite otherwise. They seem to me to be in as false a position as their husbands. They have married so many types of excellence; viewed them more nearly than any earthly excellence will bear to be viewed; modified their veneration to cold esteem; and, alas, in hundreds of instances, eventually put aside even their esteem, and hung chains of servitude upon their illusive ideals—their husbands.

In theory, of course, a parson's wife is a lively exemplar of all, or as many as possible, of the Christian virtues which it is her husband's privilege to inculcate. Of these virtues, I suppose humility, submission to marital authority, and the like, are the least important, inasmuch as the breach of no one of them is a cardinal sin. Therefore one looks to find all the visible marks of a humble, submissive, and obedient spirit in the wives of the men who are exalted above us as the teacher above his pupil. It is, in fact, not so. As a bride, she may have proposed to be humble, submissive, and obedient to her husband. But then she had a higher conception of her bridegroom's nature than actual experience has confirmed. Thus her attitude has modified because of her experience.

In their early days and years of matrimony (until, indeed, the final satisfying vicarage is attained), the wife is long-suffering and tender. She sighs over the gradual vanishment of the ideal husband whom, perchance, she wedded. Her later

tyranny is then but incubating. It is when the time of the sere and yellow leaf appears, and further translation is improbable, that this develops into monstrosity. By this, the tender chain of attachment has tightened. With reckless unwisdom, the husband has become dependent upon his spouse for all his temporal comforts; and he has far too many temporal comforts for his character's sake. She, perceiving this, exacts atonement. His domestic state becomes worse with the passage of time. To him no varying moods of temper are permitted, whether the wind be easterly, or he be plagued by unspiritual "podagra." If it hap that he omit the "My dear" which his wife demands as the perennial pre-ambule of his every utterance, he suffers for the omission. If he go to town, be his business ever so exclusive, she accompanies him, or ties a parcel to each of the ten fingers of his hands, with explicit instructions for their delivery at as many different houses. His old-time friends have long faded into the world of shadows, unless they had gained the goodwill of his wife at an early date. Without her sanction, he dare as soon invite a dragon into the parsonage as a strange preacher, or into his pulpit either. His children, like his house, are less his than hers; for she it is who rules them, as she rules him, with dictatorial spirit, and he is at home nowhere except in the dulness of his study; whereas she roams imposingly at will in parsonage and parish.

This is no fancy picture, though, confessedly, a melancholy one. Is such a man likely to be reverend, save in name?

Absolute self-renunciation, and nothing less, can alone, it seems, produce the ideal "Reverend."

SOME ODD REMEDIES.

Whome have ye knowen dye honestly
Without helps of the potycary?
Old Drama of "The Four Pa."

To one acquainted with the more rational methods of medical practice adopted in our own day, there is something amusing in the curious recipes upon which our forefathers relied for the alleviation and cure of disease. The old-time leech entered the field against the griety foe armed with the most singular weapons. As he was without any very satisfactory data upon which a scientific system of treatment might be founded, he seems to have followed a some-

what erratic course, acting very frequently at the suggestion of fancy or superstition, and ransacking the Kingdoms of Nature in search of the most unpromising, and often offensive materials for his remedies. In this very unequal contest, we can almost imagine we hear Death laughing until his fleshless chaps creak again at the ridiculous and puny efforts of his adversaries, or chuckling in his sleeve—if the old scarecrow wore anything so respectable as a coat—over the feebleness of the blows. When we read of the vagaries of regular practitioners even, we cannot help sympathising with the old writer who speaks of doctors as “the purveyors of the grave.” But what shall we say of the absurdities of quacks and herbalists, before whom the most daring modern Doctor Hellebore must hide his diminished head? Their sublime impudence is only surpassed by the credulity of the dupes who believed in their ridiculous nostrums. Astonishment, horror—the words are much too mild to express the sentiments with which we regard the number, and, still more, the nature of the pills and powders, elixirs and magic waters, which they foisted on an innocent public. To a candid mind, the prosperity of these charlatans must suggest a doubt as to the reputed longevity of our ancestors, and might even cast a suspicion on their intelligence, were it not for convincing proofs that the public of to-day is but little less gullible than it was in times before the schoolmaster came abroad. It seems to be in the nature of things that the quack must flourish and the dupe suffer; nor is the present age an exception. Indeed, the proud boast of having legalised quackery remains with us, since we permit the people to poison themselves slowly with “patent medicines,” and protect the poisoners with all the machinery of the law.

Many of the old formulæ are too gross and disgusting to be reproduced here; but perhaps an account of some of the more innocent may prove interesting to the reader. I can scarcely recommend him, however, to make a personal trial of their efficacy.

“Time was when the brains were out, the man would die,” says Macbeth; but that would not prevent his victorious enemy from making a base use of the relics of the fallen foe. Of old, the Northern warrior drank wassail from a skull; and even to-day the African savage

blows defiance to the living through war-trumpets fashioned out of the thigh-bones of the dead. But it was left to the ingenuity of mediæval physicians to discover a further use for the relics of humanity. According to them, the powdered flesh of a mummy was of sovereign power in physic, especially in contusions, where it prevented the blood from settling and coagulating at the injured part. A little of the moss growing on a skull, dried well, reduced to powder, and used as a snuff, was specific for headache; while any one suffering the agonies of toothache was instantly relieved by merely smelling a dead man's tooth. Not only were the portions of a corpse remedial, but we find that headache could be cured by binding round the temples the halter with which a man had been hanged; and the chips of a gibbet, worn in a small bag suspended round the neck, were a certain protection against an attack of ague.

No doubt, ague was much more prevalent in the old days, when so many thousand acres of what is now good arable land were lying in waste marshes, reeking with malarial vapour. But the sufferer was not without choice of other remedies which, if their efficacy was at all in proportion to their simplicity, left little to be desired. If he was unable to obtain the chips of a gibbet, or objected to them on superstitious grounds, many other courses were open to him. Thus, he is directed to have a cake baked of salted bran; while the fit is on, he is to break up the cake and give the pieces to a dog. The disease will then leave him and stick to poor Tray. Another authority recommends him to seal up a spider in a goose-quill, and hang the quill round his neck, allowing it to reach as low as the pit of the stomach.

Aspen leaves, too, were good against ague. And this reminds me of one curious principle which appears to have influenced the leech strongly in his choice of remedies—the so-called “Doctrine of Signatures.” To the old physician all plants seemed to possess such curative powers as would render him valuable assistance, if he only knew the ailments in which a particular plant, or part of a plant, might be prescribed with propriety. His peculiar method of reading between the lines in the book of nature soon enabled him to surmount this difficulty to his own satisfaction, if not to the advantage of the patient. The shape of a leaf or flower, its colour, and a hundred other trifles were gladly accepted as indications of the

medicinal virtues upon which he could most confidently rely. Thus, nettle-tea was sure to prove helpful in a case of nettle-rash; the heart-shaped leaves of the ordinary wood-sorrel were remedial in cardiac disease; and turmeric, on account of its deep yellow colour, was of great reputation in the treatment of jaundice. Is it any wonder, then, that the quivering leaves of the aspen were esteemed as a cure for ague?

For epilepsy a charm is sufficient. The physician is directed to whisper into the patient's ear the mystic words: "Gaspar fert myrrhum, thus Melchoir, Balthasar aurum." For toothache, too, there is a charm thus quaintly described by an old writer: "The charmer taketh a pece of whyt Bredde and sayth over that Breade the Pater Noster, and maketh a Crosse upon the Breade; then doth he lay that pece of Breade unto the toth that aketh or unto any sore, tournynge the Crosse unto the sore or dysease and so is he healed." But if we can by such simple means relieve the pangs of the adult sufferer from what Burns has forcibly called "the hell o' a' diseases," some of the teething troubles of the helpless infant are no less easily dealt with. We have only to cut the stem of the Deadly Nightshade into small segments, thread them like beads, and hang this curious necklace round the baby's neck.

How many good mothers are grieved to see the hands of their darlings disfigured by unsightly masses of warts. Let them try the following. It can do no harm; but I certainly cannot promise that it will do any good. "Put three droppes of the blood of a wart into an eldern leafe, and barie it in the earthe and the warts will vanish away." Sir Thomas Browne mentions a cure that is still more simple: "For warts we rub our hands before the moon." From Beaumont and Fletcher's fine comedy, "The Knight of the Burning Pestle," we learn that chilblains should be rubbed well with a mouse-skin, or the sufferer should roll his feet and ancles in hot embers. As for whooping-cough, another bugbear of anxious mothers, it is the merest trifle, and can be cured by any one who rides on a piebald horse. Snails boiled in barley water are sovereign for an ordinary cough, a prescription that would, doubtless, be more acceptable to our Gallic neighbours than ourselves. Still, if it would help to allay the epidemic that seems to prevail in our churches and concert halls, we should certainly try to overcome our squeamish repugnance. Should it prove successful,

how many, who are disturbed in their enjoyment of the music or diverted from their devotions, would combine in extolling the virtues of the humble snail.

Oh gout, thou scourge of the toes and tempers of thy victims, thou that heapest trials upon the sufferer's friends, how many would hail with unaffected joy the remedy that should banish thee for ever! Let them listen to Gerard, and bless the old herbalist with a fervent blessing. "The flowers of the lily-of-the-valley being closely stopped up in a glass, put into an ant-hill and taken away again a month after, ye shall find a liquor in the glass, which, being outwardly applied, helpeth gout." If Gerard counsels well, then adieu to the sharp agonies, the chalky joint, the embargo laid upon the rich *bonnebouche* or favourite port; last, but not least, adieu to that irritability so wearing to the patient, so trying to the miserable attendants. Question not the virtues of a simple plant, cavi! not at the "mummy" of hiding it in an ant-hill; but believe and be cured—if you can.

Among the many vagaries of the healing art none is more curious than the celebrated weapon-salve of Paracelsus. Composed of such ingredients as human suet, blood, and other things too unpleasant to be mentioned here, this preparation possessed marvellous, we might almost say, miraculous powers. Beside it the various balsams, ointments, and antiseptic lotions of the present day sink into insignificance. Our most skilful surgeons must apply their medicaments to the wound itself. Paracelsus was under no such necessity; he did not even require to see the patient. Suppose two gentlemen have a slight disagreement that affects, or seems to affect, that very delicate thing, their honour. They meet, fight, and one whips the other neatly through the lungs. Must the wounded man die? Not at all. His friends send the rapier of his adversary to the cunning doctor; it is duly anointed with the wonderful salve, and from that moment the wound begins to mend. It was, doubtless, with some such unguent the Lady of Branksome rubbed the lance that had wounded stout William of Deloraine nigh unto death.

She drew the splinter from the wound,
And with a charm she staunch'd the blood;
She bade the gash be cleansed and bound.
No longer by his side she stood,
But she has ta'en the broken lance,
And washed it from the clotted gore,
And salved the splinter o'er and o'er.

William of Deloraine in trance,
Whene'er she turned it round and round,
Twisted as if she galled the wound.

Then to her maidens she did say,
That he should be whole man and sound,
Within the course of a night and day.

Many other curious remedies deserve notice; but space, and the reader's patience, are alike limited, and I forbear. The same characteristics of ignorance, folly, and superstition are stamped upon them all. We cannot wonder that the doctor became the butt for quip and savage sarcasm; we cannot help a feeling of the deepest commiseration for the "worthless bodies" on which his singular experiments were made. A man, driven to seek the aid of physic, has always strong claims on our sympathy; but how much more must we pity those who, in the twilight times of medical science, were left to the untender mercies of the high priest of ignorance and imposture.

THROUGH THE PARIS EXHIBITION.

By the time these lines appear, the great show in Paris will have opened its hundred, or, anyhow, its half hundred gates, to the world in general; still unfinished, indeed, for such vast undertakings, in the nature of things, are never really completed in the time originally fixed; but still with so much to be seen that is strange, and new, and interesting, that the earliest visitors are not likely to have gone away disappointed. For us Britons, our national pride may be gratified by seeing our own section fairly completed and up to time, and with other nations, if a good deal is wanting to complete the picture; anyhow, the work is well blocked out, and the chief elements of the composition fairly indicated.

Nothing so immense as this has yet been seen in the way of Exhibitions; and the elaborate, and often beautiful buildings which have been built to receive the products of the whole world, far outstrip in elaboration of design and ornament any previous efforts of the kind. It may be doubted whether such another Universal Exhibition will be ever seen. Great Britain seems to have retired from the competition. Having inaugurated the series in 1851, in an altogether novel and striking way, she has become rather disenchanted of such gatherings. The leaders of our great industries have shown themselves sceptical of the advantages to be

gained by exhibiting their processes for the rest of the world to copy. And to invite other nations to exhibit their wares, and obtain customers among us, while our guests exclude by every means in their power, in the way of customs' barriers and hostile tariffs, all our leading products, savours slightly of a Quixotism that it is not in our nature to practise.

And yet, if it were proposed to have once more a world's fair in London, our national pride would be involved in "trumping the trick" of our friendly adversary on the other side of the table. To cover the Green Park with buildings that should make Buckingham Palace look like a mere suburban villa; to bridge over Piccadilly, and spread ourselves on Hyde Park with kiosks and pavilions all round the Serpentine, and cafés and restaurants along the length of the Ladies' Mile—only with some such effort as this could we hope to rival that glittering assemblage of domes, and pinnacles, and towers, which now rises like a bright vision upon the banks of the Seine.

Such an effort we are not likely to make; and, failing Great Britain, what other nation can be expected to enter into the competition? We may have future Exhibitions styled International, but when again shall we see a general concourse from all the ends of the earth—an affair that arouses interest at Pekin as well as at St. Petersburg, at Cairo as much as at Carlisle?

No; with the Paris Exhibition we may declare that the series comes to an end, as far as the nineteenth century is concerned. In the natural course of things, France would not assume the cost and trouble of another till the year 1900. And, although that year of grace may be technically reckoned as belonging to the nineteenth century, yet people, in parting with the old familiar one thousand eight hundred, will have practically taken leave of it. And then, in the meanwhile, what may not have happened to turn people's thoughts from the notion of a fresh Exhibition under the title "Universal"?

In the meantime, while people are studying ways and means for a forthcoming visit to Paris, and are wondering what there will be to see at the much-talked about Exhibition when they get there, the result of a coup d'œil of the whole circuit of the Exhibition, taken during the last throes of preparation for its opening scene, may prove of some little interest.

Assuredly it is only in Paris that we can expect to meet with such an assemblage of bright and pleasing buildings; such taste expended on temporary structures; so much solidity expressed in wood and plaster; so much florid grace expended on every detail.

It is morning, and bright sunshine brings out all the gilding and glitter of the fairy palace, its bright domes and sparkling points of colour. But the morning is so far advanced that everybody is performing the solemn rites of déjeuner. The covered corridors of the great quadrangle resound with the clatter of plates and dishes; they shine with white napery, with glass, with wine bottles of all shapes and sizes. The nimble garçon threads his way about the crowded tables with piles of dishes. Whether we are commissioners, delegates, jurors in embryo, exhibitors, or what not, we are all breakfasting handsomely, talking, eating, drinking, gesticulating in full "entrainement."

Before us the gardens are springing into existence out of ground but yesterday trampled with thousands of footprints and cut up by the wheels of innumerable carts and waggons; grassy slopes replace rude banks of earth, and roses and creepers trail over walls to which the last touches of colour are being applied by white-bloused workmen.

The Eiffel Tower begins to shine like the rest—bronzed here and gilded there, and hung with flags and streamers. Pinnacles and oriental topees, bulbous domes with glittering roofs, Persian minarets, Aztec temples, all are putting on their brightest aspect. The whole scene appears to open out like a flower; some tropical flowers of the gayest hues, about which hover a multitude of bright-winged insects.

If we cross the bridge and survey the banks of the river, there is the same scene of advanced preparation. The sparkling Seine itself is hemmed in with erections of all kinds. It is a show for the people who crowd the decks of the little steam-boats; the navigators of the great barges loaded with firewood or building stones, or, piled high with empty wine-casks, have their share in the show, and gaze in wonder at the city of pavilions and restaurants that has sprung up on the river-shore since their last voyage. All up the slopes of the Trocadéro, too, there are so many new constructions that the fountains have hardly room to play, or the waters to flow; but all looks gay and bright, ex-

cept, perhaps, the Trocadéro Palace itself. That, people turn their backs upon, as quite an ancient monument. But eleven years ago and it was the centre of attraction, and people wondered at and talked about it; but now it is of no more account than an old shoe to the crowd of to-day eager for the latest novelty.

Perhaps it is the gay and festal aspect of the scene that gives the most vivid impression. All those cafés, brasseries, restaurants, Dutch cabarets, Swiss restaurants, American bars, which seem to claim the first attention as they occupy the most conspicuous position in the show—all this may seem a little overdone to people who come here with a serious purpose. But to the general this section of the boulevards turned loose into the Champ de Mars will have its attractions; and, after all, the fringe of gaiety is soon passed, and you may be as serious as you please in the endless vistas of galleries which open out before you.

As a whole the Exhibition is arranged with great skill, and with a methodic classification that is characteristic of the clear and logical, if somewhat bureaucratic, mind of the organising Frenchman. Everything here ranges itself under nine different groups; and a general index to the whole Exhibition may be made on the fingers of both hands. At the head of the bill come the Fine Arts—which have a group and a palace all to themselves—the extreme right wing of the chief building, a palace with its own subsidiary dome, and a principal entrance there beneath. As to the art treasures which will be there revealed, it is too early to speak with certainty; but there will be found contributions from all nations which have any independent school of art. All the pictures will be modern, for no work executed before 1878 will be admissible; indeed, no work that appeared in the Burlington House Exhibition, the Paris Salon, or the Paris Exhibition of that year would be eligible. But our living English artists will be well represented; and also German art will find a place; for, happily, art is a stranger to the misunderstandings of rival governments. And we may hope to see the renaissance art of Italy worthily represented.

Well, opposite to the Fine Arts a similar structure, with dome and entrance corresponding, is devoted to the Liberal Arts, which form the second group in the official classification. And the Liberal Arts have a scope that is tolerably extensive. The

art of teaching is justly reckoned one among the chief, so that all the apparatus of education comes in. And with the scholastic equipage comes that of the librarian, and of those who print and make books. All the implements of drawing and modelling are here to be found. Photography, too, naturally takes its place among the liberal arts; and all kinds of scientific instruments are here to be found. Medicine and surgery might well demand a place for themselves in a group apart; only as these sciences have not much to show, fitted for a general exhibition, they may be content with a place here. Music and the drama take the lead in another division of the same wide group, and musical instruments are massed together in the transept, where a grand competitive march of pianos will no doubt soon be heard. And with the drama we have costume and scenery—although whether the scene-painter's is a liberal or fine art is a question that might be argued upon. In this particular group all the principal nations who exhibit are represented side by side with the native product. But we have also another branch—something didactic for the professors themselves—a kind of retrospective view of the history of labour, commencing with the hammering out of flint knives and weapons, and ending with the latest development of motive power. And with this there is a kind of general view of the progress of mankind, touching both on archaeology and anthropology.

All this may seem somewhat dry in the reading, as catalogues are apt to be, but the building itself is so warm in its decoration, and arranged with such an eye to effect, that it really proves one of the most attractive points of the Exhibition; and the galleries, estrades, and staircases are arranged with so much skill, that they form a study in themselves. There is a round-point under the dome of this section which is really one of the features of the Exhibition.

Fortunately, it is not necessary to dwell at length upon the groups three, four, and five which follow, simply because there is so much of them, that nothing less than a technical volume would be necessary to do them justice; and the mere headings of the groups of Furniture, Textiles, Mining, gives no idea of the cloud of *etceteras* that are comprised in each group. Only it should be borne in mind that it is only in these three groups that each competing

nation exhibits separately, "on its own hook." Also that France occupies a solid block to itself in the centre, and that the rest of the world arranges itself after its own fashion on either side, Great Britain having a very favourable position next to the Fine Arts Palace.

But the next group, that of Machinery, gives us a sensation. For here is the Hall of Machinery, stretching along behind the great central dome, the outline of which breaks what would otherwise appear as a monstrous length of roof-ridge. The structure is as plain as can be; decorators and gilders have left it alone. Except for simple colouring along the lines of construction, it has no adornment to boast of; and yet it is impressive, almost sublime in the vastness of its space, and the multitude of its contents. It is the hall of giants, of the giant force of modern civilisation, giants, sombre, strong, and fierce, ever ready to rend the feeble beings who hold them captive, and who are yet but themselves the vassals and humble servitors of the powers they have enslaved. That is how it strikes one, anyhow, as one looks down from the lofty gallery in the great hall of machines.

And here again France has headed the trick. For this gigantic nave, supported on twenty iron arches, slightly ogival in outline, covers a space of nearly fifty-nine thousand square yards with its single span—that is to say, it is in round numbers about one hundred and twenty-five yards wide, by four hundred and seventy yards in length, dimensions that have not hitherto been reached by any single structure of the kind.

And to realise at a glance both the charm of this Exhibition, and the vastness of its component parts, there is no better way than to march through the principal entrance under the great central dome, with all its richness of decoration and colouring, and so straight through the central gallery, adorned with magnificent trophies, and thus through the main avenue into the great Hall of Machinery. After that, you can fill in the details at your leisure.

And now we may leave the "groups" for awhile, and wander among the curious varied structures that occupy the grounds at the end of the Liberal Arts Palace, and round its outside edge, where we are among the pavilions devoted to the various States and Republics of Southern and Central America, the great red hall of Montezuma, the home of the Mexican Republic, and

the Kiosquiah Palace of the Empire of Brazil, with the bulbous domes and tropical colouring of a dozen minor States; with our own gorgeous Indian Palace, and, literally, without fatigue, survey mankind from China to Peru, with Morocco, and Japan, and Egypt putting in their claims to notice, with a street in Cairo to take the place of our own old London street. And if there is nothing here quite so picturesque as the Street of Foreign Houses of the Paris Exhibition of 1878, yet we have only to make our way to the terrace along the river front to find a curious and instructive assemblage of dwellings of every age and clime, which has been designed and arranged as a history—"de visu"—of the habitations of man. The prehistoric dwellings are, perhaps, the most interesting: the caves, the grottoes, the dwellings of reeds, or the rude, timber huts, the lake dwellings upon piles—all reproduced, upon slight documentary evidence, possibly, but, nevertheless, with much *vraisemblance*. It is instructive also to note how the more elaborate and solid dwelling of the historic period reproduces, in stone or brick, the features of the primitive dwelling; how the wooden posts are dignified into columns of stone; the rude, thatched roof replaced by tiles of varied form; the beehive covering of reeds, glorified into the glittering eastern dome.

As a contrast to the "street of all ages" is the little railway line that belongs exclusively to the Exhibition, with a terminus right at the back of the big building behind the Hall of Machinery, with a station at the Pont de Jena, and stopping-places at short distances along the route, which leads all down the galleries that border the river to a *dépôt* in the Square des Invalides.

But it would be a mistake to pass without stopping to examine the long galleries devoted to agriculture and horticulture, and all kinds of food products, with the implements and agricultural machinery of many different nations, with a section of grape culture and vintages, and a shady avenue of trees from end to end. These galleries dispose of groups seven, eight, and nine, although flowers and plants, by the way, and sundry other kindred classes, are to be found on the terraces of the Trocadéro. But still, when you arrive at the further end of the long agricultural gallery, you may feel that you have elbowed through the "groups," and have nothing more to do but enjoy yourself.

And it is a strange new world that meets the view on one side of the esplanade of Invalides. It is the land of the white elephant, the land of marble mountains, of palm and rice-wines, of tigers, deer, and peacocks, of gold, perhaps. Anyhow, it is a land that seizes upon the jaded imagination, because we know so little about it; that strange Indo-Chinese peninsula whose rôle in the world's history might have been so great, and yet has hitherto been so small. Burmah, indeed, we know something about, and we are not altogether unacquainted with Siam. But who can claim an intimate acquaintance with Cambodia, with its relics of a powerful dynasty and empire that has passed away, or Laos, with its lovely lakes and picturesque landscapes, its pleasant, lively towns, devoted to gossip and animated movement, among pagodas, bonzes, gardens, to the sound of the tom-tom, the drum, or the melodious gong? And then the rafts on the river, and the floating huts and the hundreds of boats that flit about here and there! Decidedly there are charms about Indo-China that we realise for the first time when we see the bright and quaint little street of gay colours and fantastic architecture that represents Indo-China, or rather that part of it which the French have taken under their protection.

Indeed, we have upon the Square des Invalides a complete Colonial Exhibition, beginning with an Algerian palace and bazaar, with porches, arcades, and minarets; and a grand pavilion of Tunis. Altogether, something like a bit of an Arab town, with shops, and artificers, and all kinds of Eastern nicknacks. But, somehow, the Arab charm has a little faded, and wants the freshness and unexpectedness of Cochin China and Tonquin.

And those Annamites, with their brown smug faces, are decidedly interesting: not Chinese exactly, nor Tartars, nor Malays, but something betwixt and between. And we have a little Annamite theatre, and games and diversions. Yes, they are a people who love to be amused, and there is nothing like that for inspiring a friendly feeling. And we may prophesy that, if anything is to be the rage this year in Paris, it will be that corner of the Exhibition where the tom-tom beats and the gaily-coloured temples and topes of farther India rise among their pleasant surroundings.

And in front of this gay village, "grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled

front," in the form of an elegant Bureau de Guerre, a building of quite a monumental cast, and an example of what can be done in the way of magnificence with plaster and cement. It is crammed with the appliances of war, and is a pleasing comment on the exhibition opposite. These are the benefits we — French, English, Germans, Dutch, everybody—confer upon less civilized peoples when we take them under our protection : obus - shell, shrapnel, canister, grape, with bullets of all kinds and shapes, and death-dealing explosives. It is inevitable, perhaps ; but none the less sad on that account. Still, everybody enjoys a good show of death-dealing implements, and there is no doubt that the pavilion of war will attract its crowds of admirers.

There is still much to be seen that we have missed, by the way. But even to make the round of this great gathering from all parts of the earth, is a fatiguing experience, and all the glitter and variety of the scene fairly benumbs, at last, the powers of observation. And so let us pass between the gay pagodas that mark the entrance on this side of the Exhibition grounds, and, finding ourselves in quite a different latitude from where we entered, pass out among the throng that is watching the progress of events with much curiosity from outside.

HUMOUR.

It is very frequently stated that it is extremely difficult to give a satisfactory definition of humour. Now, it is possible that this difficulty may arise from a slight confusion in the minds of those who make the statement. When we attempt to define this word, we almost invariably think of various specimens of the quality drawn from very different sources, and we find that they affect us in so many different ways, that a definition which will include all their wondrous variety is impossible. One man's humour, we say, is characterised by a tender beauty and grace ; another's by a savage and vindictive ferocity ; the humour of a third may be largely dependent upon the author's personal characteristics. But all these are qualities not of humour, but of the men themselves.

Nor do the expressions, "coarse," "delicate," "refined," really apply to humour ; they rather apply to the humourist himself, or to the use he makes

of the materials provided for him. Again, the word "humour," or "humorous," is applied indiscriminately to the object which provokes amusement, or to the faculty by which that object is perceived, when in truth these words belong to neither one nor other, but to the result of the union of the two.

Take as an illustration the case of music. Roughly speaking, music consists, in the first place, of the result of an external harmonious arrangement of sounds falling upon ears qualified to appreciate them. If men were not qualified to appreciate such sounds, their orderly arrangement would not result in music, just as in the case of Mr. Pecksniff, the celebrated architect, to whom, it will be remembered, organ-playing sounded like a melodious snore.

Now, the analogy between humour and music is a singularly perfect one. Music, objectively considered, is at first an harmonious arrangement of sounds ; but, later, as the musical faculty becomes developed, it also includes the arrangement of the ideas of sounds in the mind. The humorous faculty has been developed in the same manner. Originally, it would consist, objectively considered, in a rudimentary power to appreciate an unexpected fitness or incongruity observed in certain occurrences, apart from their practical application in daily life, while, later, as this power developed, there would occur spontaneously in the mind association of ideas of unexpected fitness or incongruity, analogous to the creative faculty of music. And just as in the case of Mr. Pecksniff—than whom surely none could have a worse ear for music—there was a rudimentary faculty for the "divine art," since the booming of the organ sounded differently from ordinary snoring, inasmuch as it was melodious ; so, probably, no human being is altogether devoid of a rudimentary sense of humour.

Of what retards and modifies the developement of this sense, we shall speak presently. Meanwhile, let the definition of humour stand thus : Humour is the result of an unexpected fitness or incongruity, observed either in the world without, or in the association of ideas within, acting upon a mind qualified to appreciate in a special manner such fitness or incongruity, apart from their practical application in daily life. This may seem rather a "metaphysical" way of putting it ; but illustration may make it

clearer. Let us take a few specimens of humour at random, not of the highest or most complex class, but simply the ordinary type that suffices for momentary enjoyment.

There is the well-known story of the clergyman who was preaching in his son's church. The son was addicted to what his father considered foolish excesses in ritual; and when the old gentleman gave out as his text, "Have mercy upon my son . . . a lunatic," the smile which went round the church might be well excused. Here the unexpected fitness of the application was enhanced by the unfitness of the place for jesting.

But humour is sometimes caused by the irrelevance of two remarks, either of which would suit the circumstances well enough.

The following is a fair example. At a Scotch funeral one of the mourners approached the minister and whispered to him:

"Dae ye ken what I aye think just when they're letting down the coffin?" (the coffin was just being lowered into the grave).

"Solemn thoughts, I suppose," said the minister; "of death and eternity, I have no doubt."

"Na," said the other, "I'm aye awfu' glad it's no me."

Here the contrast with the answer of the minister is not without its resultant humour. Again, the will attributed to Rabelais: "I owe much, I have nothing, the rest I give to the poor," owes perhaps more to the tremendous unfitness for such jesting at so solemn a time as death, than to the incongruity existing between the different parts of the sentence.

American humour is characterised by an outrageous bringing together of incongruous ideas. Mark Twain, coming into a neighbour's house, and, after lazily smoking and chatting for a while, remarking suddenly that he had only dropped in to tell them their house was on fire, is a good enough example of this, as is also the picture of the same distinguished author weeping over the grave of Adam, the "noble old man who did not live to see his son."

We may note here that what is to be accounted legitimate humour is regulated in any age by the state of general culture and refinement. Much of the humour that was freely indulged even before Queens and Princesses would now be regarded by most people as coarse and disgusting, rather than humorous; but

this does not arise from the nature or sense of humour having undergone any real change, it simply indicates that in the minds of cultured people of the present day the revolting nature of the subject outweighs its humorous aspect. Many must be conscious in perusing the robust humour of earlier days that a mental contest goes on between their sense of refinement and their sense of humour. Modern education and conditions of social life have gradually strengthened the general sense of refinement, which had but a rudimentary existence in the days of the Tudors.

The development of the sense of humour, like all other developments, is regulated largely by external conditions. A good example of this is to be found in the fact that the Scotchman is not so keenly appreciative of humour as the Englishman or Irishman. Yet how could he be? In days gone by, when Scottish character was forming, the terrific doctrines of the "Confession of Faith," combined with the necessity for the strictest economy and frugality in living, impressed the Scottish mind with the seriousness of life both here and hereafter, and left an almost ineffaceable stamp on the national character. How could a man to whom not only this life was hard and uncertain, but who felt this precarious life to be overshadowed by the more tremendous uncertainty, or rather the appalling certainty of the next, how could such a man be frivolous?

The question as to who was among the number of the elect, was one too far-reaching in its nature to permit mere frivolity to have a permanent place in the national character. Here, also, lies the explanation of that apparent hypocrisy with which Southrons have so freely charged the North in connection with sabbatarianism and asceticism generally. The weakness of human nature could not be so far counteracted by sternness of demeanour and thought as to prevent sin entering the strictest parishes, while certain fixed rules of conduct might yet be observed. The lighter side of human nature was suppressed in a large degree by circumstances; but, as in the case of the ascetic monks of old, human nature could not be suppressed altogether. Yet there is no connection between austerity of mind and laxity of life, any more than there is—although some people would apparently have us think there is—between frivolity and innocence.

It is on account of their gloomy theological system that Scottish humour is so largely clerical in its character. Not that clerical humour is, as a rule, better than lay—very far from that—but that there was in it an undoubted sense of relief. There was, undoubtedly, an unexpressed feeling that things could not be so terribly bad in the next world if the minister, always a dread power in by-gone times, condescended to joke and to share the frivolities, if not the weaknesses of mankind.

Again, many of the stories which seem humorous to us, were full of serious meaning to the actors in them. There is humour to us in the following story, quoted by Professor de Morgan, although none to the utterers of the following dialogue, not from a want of a sense of humour, but from the seriousness of the subject:

"How mony of the elect do ye think there will be on the earth at present?" said one Scotchman to another.

"Maybe, a dizzen" (dozen), responded the other.

"Hoot, man! no near sae mony as that!" indignantly rejoined his friend.

The same remarks apply to the story of the old lady who was very despondent as to the condition of the world. She was sharply rebuked by a neighbour:

"Janet, woman, ye surely think that naeboddy will be saved except yoursel' and the minister!"

"Weel," responded Janet, "I sometimes has my doubts about the minister."

The question was too serious to affect the sense of humour in either party. Nor is there in this last story any of the conceit which might have animated the ancient Jewish rabbi, when he declared that if all the world were lost he and his son would be saved, since, in Scotland, the idea of salvation by personal merit was universally repudiated.

There may be something, too, of this sense of relief which accounts for the rapturous way in which clerical humour is received even in England, where beef has always been plentiful and religion less gloomy than in Scotland. It is true that clerical humour is not "national" to such an extent in England as in Scotland; but yet, the reason for its appreciation is probably the same.

Many people cannot shake off a vague and undefined terror of the future, which is warranted by pulpit addresses; yet,

when the same voice utters the light and frivolous jest, people are reassured. But the whole question is very simple. If there be a terrible future, even for a few—a future so terrible that words cannot paint it—then the clergy, of all people, should not jest; if, on the other hand, there is really nothing to fear, why should they frighten us? Yet many people comfort themselves with clerical wit, like Crozat, who remarked to Massillon:

"Mon père, votre morale m'affraye; mais votre façon de vivre me rassure."

One other circumstance, which may raise the idea that humour is difficult to define, arises from the fact that whatever causes a laugh is apt to be called humour. It is not humour, truly so called, that impels a rude street boy to throw a snowball at your new hat, and laugh uproariously if his "little joke" succeeds. Laughter, in this case, is probably only the expression of the partial gratification of a yet imperfectly-developed, but perfectly natural spirit of exasperation at the sight of one who is better dressed or is occupying a better position than himself; a spirit which, in its later development, may make its possessor a patriot or a politician, but not a humourist. Such conduct can only be said to be humorous in the same sense as that of Mark Twain's celebrated ancestor, who, he tells us, was a "born humourist," and who was in the habit of stabbing people unexpectedly in the dark, "in order to see them jump."

The smile or grin of sarcasm is not born of true humour, but is the outcome of the gratification of seeing pain inflicted, worthy only of fallen angels, and not of kindly human nature. Humour softens and brightens everything it touches: it is for making life happier, not for inflicting pain, that it exists.

Yet its very kindly nature can the hand of genius turn into a vehicle of attack or punishment, as witness Pope's savage assault upon Hervey; Dryden's fierce description of Buckingham; or Macaulay's scathing criticism upon Mr. Robert Montgomery's poems, which, without it, would be sheer brutality.

Humour then, in its last analysis, is the same under all circumstances, different specimens of it owing their special characteristics to the humourist himself, just as a "primrose by the river's brim" is a really different thing to different people, or, as Swift glorified even the homely broomstick.

The bitterness, delicacy, tenderness, ferocity of the individual make humour their vehicle; but it is far more suited for kindness than for ill-will. Humour, otherwise commonplace, is sometimes decked out by certain peculiarities of voice or manner of the speaker. This we know to have been largely the case with Charles Lamb, much of his humour being lost in repetition. Yet he, too, has many instances of true humour in his sayings, as for example, when he apologises for Coleridge's magnificent flights of philosophical fancy, by saying that "Coleridge was always so full of his fun;" or when he compared that great thinker to an "archangel a little damaged." No spice of ill-will flavoured these personal remarks; it was a spirit of pure fun which animated him.

Herr Teufelsdröckh is worthy of mention in this connection. That distinguished Professor, it will be remembered, was only known to have laughed once, and then at the idea of a cast metal King. Not a very comical image to ordinary people, perhaps; yet, doubtless, in the mind of Teufelsdröckh, a whole series of unexpected fitnesses and incongruities ranging over the whole field of political and historical science suddenly suggested themselves, and moved him to laughter; "such a peal of laughter," his biographer describes it. Although the Professor is a myth, yet, considering to whom we owe the figure, we may grant that he illustrates the theory that study and reflection on grave and serious topics do not impair the sense of humour, but only prevents it being excited by trifles. No thinking person could ever giggle, if we except Dr. Parr, who is said to have indulged in this peculiarly feminine form of laughter.

Mr. Mallock, in that most delightful book, "The New Republic," makes one of his characters declare that modern humour owes all its point to Christianity. It is because Christianity has made life infinitely serious, that Sterne, for example, sees it full of "infinite jest!" There is, of course, truth in this, as it has previously been endeavoured to be shown; but its bearing is of limited extent. It is the minority to whom life has been made infinitely serious by the teaching of Christianity; but yet Christianity, as we have seen, gives point by contrast to clerical wit, to the remarks of rigid Calvinists, to the hilarious indecency of Rabelais, the innuendoes of Sterne—both clergymen, by the way—or to the immorality of Wycherley and Dryden. But the issues

of Christianity have little to do with the gentle quips of Lamb, the genial humour of Dickens, or the kindly satire of Thackeray, where we find most clearly the most delicate, purest, noblest appreciation of humour, and which they hand on to us for us to appreciate according as our sense of humour is developed, just as the musician hands on, by means of organ music or choral song, his own perceptions and ideas of the beautiful.

SHILLINGBURY SKETCHES.

A COUNTY MAGNATE.

THE LATIMERS is just as distinctly the big house of the district, of which Shillingbury is the centre, as ever it was; but it by no means looms so large above its surroundings in the life of the place as it did in the days when Sir Thomas Kedgbury held sway there. It is the big house still; but big houses, during the last quarter of a century, have scarcely preserved their relative position of consequence to the rest of the world. They have remained what they ever were, while little houses have been growing bigger, even in my birthplace, where the rate of progress is by no means rapid. Supposing that Sir Francis, the present Baronet, had elected to follow in the steps of his father and fill the offices of Churchwarden, Justice of the Peace, and Chairman of Quarter Sessions, the greetings in the market-place, the deferential silence of the gathering of men addressed by him, and the sentiment of reverence permeating society in general, would never have been accorded to him in the same degree in which they were given to his father.

Baronets count for something still, no doubt; but nowadays county influence is apt to dwindle woefully if it be not carefully nursed and tended. The voices which send a man to the seat of worship are to be counted by hundreds instead of tens; and these voices must be delicately dealt with, or the tone may grow most unpleasant to the ear. Old Sir David would send a dozen hares at Christmas into a particular village, and the support of every man with a vote therein would be his whenever he might ask for it. Sir Thomas, his son, would compass the same end by a morning's visit and hand-shaking, and talk about the next Local Government Bill; but for Sir Francis to have followed suit would have meant a lot of hard work; and hard

work, especially when undertaken for an end for which he did not care two straws, Sir Francis disliked exceedingly. He early determined to let his neighbours alone; and so it came about that men whose fathers had trembled at old Sir David's nod, went about their public duties thinking rather how they should please themselves, than as to how it might strike the owner of The Latimers.

Sir Thomas was all his life a theorist, a man of progressive ideas, who never got any nearer to his ideal. He was always on the look-out for a golden age, for the country in general, and for the Fallowshire farmer in particular. At his Christmas rent audit he always made a speech, in which the speedy advent of the good time was proclaimed; for, in his day, there were bad times in the agricultural world, as there always have been, and, doubtless, ever will be. One year the farmer's profits were to be doubled by an improved system of drill husbandry; another by substituting sunflowers as a crop for swede turnips; and another by growing sugar-beet to compete with West-Indian cane.

Sir Thomas was a theorist in the cultivation of the youthful mind, as well as of his ancestral acres, and as soon as his heir had learnt his alphabet, he elaborated a system of education which should stimulate in Master Frank's brain the growth of ideas, as powerfully as the patent corn-drill should accelerate the germination of wheat and barley in the soil of the home farm. As a man of modern ideas—a revolutionist in a small way—Sir Thomas found the old courses of Eton and Christ Church quite behind the times. He was probably, in a measure, right; but, like all reformers, he found it easier to destroy than to construct; and the substitute he found for the above-named venerable foundations brought forth strange fruit in the end.

In his youth Sir Thomas had spent a good deal of money in the cause of liberty. Greek and Polish patriots made heavy raids on his purse, and the damage he did to his fortune was only just repaired by a judicious marriage with the only daughter of Joshua Dibbs, Esq., of the Hollies, Martlebury, and late of Saint Mary Axe, in the City of London. He married late, and he was over fifty when his son and heir was born, so he had good store of experience to guide him in his educational task. Naturally, the young hopeful was to be very much the same sort of man as his father, only

much more highly finished and successful. Everything that the father had aimed at and missed, the son was to aim at and bring down. Sir Thomas was chairman of almost every committee sitting in the county. To all these honours his son must succeed; and he must, in addition, be the member for the division of the county. Somehow or other, though East Fallowshire was a Whig stronghold, and Sir Thomas one of the mildest of Liberals, he had never been able to persuade the electors to return him to Parliament. Once his party tried him as a candidate, and temporarily lost the seat to a fox-hunting young Tory, all because—so the party-agent declared—Sir Thomas talked for more than an hour about the constitution of Athens, comparing it with that of England, to a lot of farmers, who thought and cared about nothing in politics save the repeal of the malt-tax. In spite of his own failure, Sir Thomas never dreamt that any constituency in England would reject a candidate of his own training. If Mr. Francis Kedgbury were once seated in the House, oratory and common sense, the fruit of hereditary and careful training, would soon carry him into an under-secretaryship; and, the first step taken, there remained nothing but a succession of lifts, culminating either at the Foreign Office or the Treasury, with a peerage, Lord Kedgbury, of The Latimers, thrown in by way of decoration.

Sir Thomas's theory of education did not, however, stop at polishing a young man on one side only. Frank must stand out perfect—a four-square man. A correct literary style, and a good training in modern languages, were little less important than a knowledge of public affairs, and, in these days of popular science, a public man should be at home in at least one branch of physical research. From memory of his own school days, he did not fancy that Frank would pick up much in the way of science, if subjected to the same curriculum; though, no doubt, the older schools had been rudely shaken out of their grammatical torpor since he was last birched.

So Frank was sent to a private establishment, conducted on the lines of our great public schools. The master thereof was a D.D. of Oxford, and imbued with "university tone" to his very finger-tips. So Sir Thomas was fain to believe that this special attribute, without which a man can hardly expect to succeed in English public

life, might be picked up at Dr. Dillow's, notwithstanding the fact that there was on the premises a laboratory fitted up with all the most improved machinery for probing the secrets of Nature.

Sir Thomas was right in this conjecture. Frank picked up the requisite amount of tone under Dr. Dillow's care; and, if he was at all like the young gentleman described in the doctor's terminal reports, he must have mastered nearly every department of learning. When he was eighteen, the turn of modern languages came; and he was sent, first, for six months to France, and then for a like time to Germany. He certainly spent this year of his life to some advantage, for he came back with a good knowledge of French and German, and a store of ideas on things in general which he did not at once divulge at The Latimers. He was very anxious to finish his education at Bonn, instead of at Oxford; but Sir Thomas, in spite of his progressive ideas, felt that this would be too complete a disregard of orthodox usage.

Sir Francis was a little disappointed when he came to test his son as to his familiarity with the works of Novalis and Montesquieu; neither did he find much progress in physics or chemistry. So, by way of fanning the lamp of science, he took Frank with him to a meeting of the British Association. Here a farther disappointment awaited him. Frank invariably went to sleep before the chairman of the meeting had concluded his introductory remarks; and, after a day or two, said that he wasn't feeling well, and thought he had better get back to The Latimers and see Dr. Goldingham.

Sir Francis assented with a bad grace; and, when he followed some days later, he found that the young gentleman had recovered rapidly in his native air, and had been shooting rabbits ever since his return.

Then came Frank's career at Oxford; but this was brief and not particularly glorious. There was a mystery hanging over it which not even the social detectives of Shillingbury were able to fathom; but the most commonly accepted view was that its untimely interruption had something to do with a young lady, the daughter of a lodging-house keeper. Others, more friendly, declared that the air of Oxford was too damp for the delicate chest which Frank had inherited from his mother. Anyhow, after two terms, that young gentleman's name ceased to figure on the

college books, and he returned to The Latimers to complete his training for public life under Sir Thomas's particular care.

For the remainder of his life the worthy Baronet had to take to heart the teaching of the maxim that any one can lead a horse to the water, but that no one can make him drink if he be not so disposed. He had begun his heir-training with the fundamental mistake of estimating Frank as a swan of the finest plumage, whereas the boy was a goose, and nothing more—a well-grown, amiable young goose, no doubt; but a goose all the same. In settling the question with himself that Frank was to rise to the top of the tree, he probably reckoned quite as much on the excellence of his own system of training as on the quality of the material he would have to deal with. Still, in any case, he must have valued the qualifications of his son and heir ridiculously higher than the rest of the world did. Frank was a good-natured young fellow with average ability and a keen sense of humour, and if he had been educated on the ordinary lines of youths of his quality, he would probably have made just as good a figure in the world as his father. Sir Thomas, unfortunately, wanted him to be ever so much better; and to compass this end he dosed the boy with science and political economy till he positively came to loathe every subject which his father regarded as necessary for the formation of a public man. The grocer's boy, after a surfeit of currants and sweet stuff, is fabled never to touch sugar again; so it was not extraordinary that Francis Kedgbury, after being crammed with his father's nostrums for promoting the growth of statesmanship, should resolve to have done with them for good and all as soon as he should have come to man's estate.

This epoch he determined should begin when he finally shook the dust of Oxford off his feet. Thereupon arose a struggle, which at one time threatened to become acute between his father and himself, as to the way in which he should spend his time and the subjects which should occupy his thoughts; for Sir Thomas was by no means ready to give over his course of treatment, and thereby confess that his great experiment had turned out a failure. He laid down a course of reading in political science, and proposed to hold an examination of his candidate at the end of three months; but as he found that, at the

end of this time, the text-books had never been cut, there came an open quarrel. Francis went off to London, and began to read for the Bar. The rupture was healed after a few months; and, before a year had elapsed, Sir Thomas died and left his lands and honours to the heir whom he had in vain tried to fashion into a Somers or a Fox.

A young man, who comes into a baronetcy and five thousand a year, unencumbered either by mortgages or brothers and sisters, is generally set down as one of Fortune's favourites. Sir Francis, no doubt, fully realised that Fortune had been very kind to him, and he set himself to enjoy her gifts in earnest. His father had been by no means the traditional English country gentleman, and he, himself, differed quite as much from the normal type, only in a diametrically opposite direction. He was of an easy temperament, very sensible to the influence of his surroundings—supposing those surroundings to be in any way sympathetic.

During his sojourn in France, he had read largely of the fiction of the country, and, not unnaturally, began to take a light and airy view of life. The rigorous apprenticeship in county business, as a prelude to managing the affairs of the State, which his father was always exhibiting to him as his manifest destiny, seemed very tame and dreary when compared with a spell of Bohemianism in Paris, and the experience of a "grande passion" or two. Certain of his French fellow-students, too—French boys of seventeen are much more enterprising than English of the same age—gave him highly picturesque accounts of their exploits with the "beau sexe;" and Frank would have been marvellously different from other boys if he had not been fired with an ambition to investigate for himself these rose-grown paths before settling down to the serious business of his career. About this time he began to evolve terribly pessimistic theories of life, and to express the same in verse.

It was a severe wrench when the time came for him to break with Louis and Achille, and betake himself beyond the Rhine to do battle with the barbarous brain-perplexing intricacies of Teutonic cases and genders. A promise was made on either side that letters should be exchanged, so that each might know how the world was dealing with the other in the way of romantic adventure. This correspondence was kept up for a month or two;

but by degrees it slackened, and, finally, Frank let it drop altogether. He had, indeed, found that the heart-friendships he had set up with Carl and Gustav, at Dusseldorf, were absorbing enough to fill the void in his nature caused by the separation from his friends of last year. Carl and Gustav were both going to the University of Bonn, and Frank, fascinated by the accounts of what Carl's brother and Gustav's cousin had to say about the delights of that seat of learning, wrote home and made that suggestion about going thither which Sir Thomas found necessary to veto. In his discourse with his new friends there was, no doubt, a strain of romance in which Amalia and Lötchen came in for a share of attention; but the bent of the young Teutons' lucubrations was towards more serious matters, such as the Infinite, the inconceivable Realities, with occasional excursions into the lighter regions of World-anguish, and Time-sickness. Frank, who would have yawned his head off at the bare mention of such themes while he was subjected to the Voltairean influence of Louis and Achille, began after a bit to take an interest in searching for the cause of his being, and by the time he had done with Dusseldorf, could spin yarns metaphysic with the best of them, and found himself furnished with a set of ideas on matters social and religious, such as would assuredly not square with those current in the drawing-rooms and pulpits of Fallowshire.

The Oxford episode was the first manifestation of the effect of the new training. The heaven absorbed by Mr. Francis Kedgbury during his continental sojourn, worked in a fashion which quite put him out of sympathy with his environment, and soon led to a catastrophe. The six months' residence at The Latimers which followed, was probably the most miserable time that he and his father and mother ever knew. Sir Thomas felt that his life task had come to naught, and Frank had not the gift of reticence. After he had had the pleasure of being present at half-a-dozen dinner-parties in the neighbourhood, the verdict of the county was that the future master of The Latimers was an atheist, a revolutionist, and a libertine.

Those who know the sweet spirit of charity with which really "good" people beat back assaults on their cherished beliefs, will understand that, in spite of these hard words, Frank Kedgbury need not have been a monster; that he might, on the

contrary, have been a very good fellow. But, good or not, it was evident that he did not suit The Latimers at present; and he had sense enough to see this. He went to London with no intention to work at the law; his intention was rather to explore some byway of literature. I don't know whether he ever found this byway, but he certainly enjoyed himself vastly in the turnpike road out of which it may have branched.

When Sir Thomas died there was an uneasy sensation amongst the inmates of the half-dozen houses in the district which were on visiting terms with The Latimers, and an active curiosity in less exalted circles as to how the young Baronet would bear his honours. They soon had an opportunity of judging, for Sir Francis came down to reside at once. There was a little disappointment in certain quarters when it transpired that the "menage" was to be a bachelor one, for a report had got about Shillingbury that a popular burlesque actress was likely to proclaim herself to the world as Lady Kedgbury. Sir Francis asked a few of the local sportsmen to shoot the woods in the autumn; and, though the gentlemen could see that their host was not at home with them in their own range of topics, they agreed that he wasn't a bad fellow, seeing what a queer bringing up he had had. They were less pleased with some men from London who were staying in the house; men who did not shoot, but came out to luncheon, and during that meal led the conversation away from the slaughter of animals along a track which was very strange ground to the Fallowshire folk; men who came to dinner in velvet coats smelling strongly of tobacco, and always called their host by his Christian name. Sir Francis, the upper dozen of the neighbourhood decided, might come all right in the end; but it would be well to get rid at once of the men in the velvet coats.

But these gentlemen, Dick Short, who did the theatrical work for the "Sundial," and Harry Cross, who was on "The Grove," were not blessed with many friends who kept so good a house as Frank Kedgbury, and were consequently in no hurry to be got rid of. Sir Francis spent a good part of the winter in town, and he certainly found a dinner at the old place, and a symposium afterwards in his rooms, a pleasanter way of spending the evening, than sitting alone in his library at The Latimers. Still, it was, somehow,

not so pleasant to be called "Frank" by Dick and Harry, as it was in the old days. Then, again, these worthies had taken upon themselves to impress upon him—in season and out of season—that it would never do for him to settle down into what they were pleased to call the chawbacon line of life.

He dined several times at Lord St. Osyth's—the biggest of all the Fallowshire Peers—and found that all the wit in the world was not monopolised by the gentlemen who write for the daily press; and, before he left town, he accepted an invitation to spend Christmas at Lord St. Osyth's place in West Fallowshire.

Lord St. Osyth was a clever, cultivated man, who had always looked upon Sir Thomas Kedgbury as a shallow pedant, and regretted that a nice boy like Frank should have been spoilt by his father's folly; and he set to work in the most judicious manner to repair the mischief, and win the stray sheep back to the fold.

"My dear Kedgbury," he said, the first night in the smoking-room, "you must find the people horribly dull about here, after your life in town."

"Their tastes are not exactly my tastes, I confess," Frank replied; "but I don't know that I can find fault with them on that score."

"But you must have society about you. You can't always import your friends from London. Nowadays, you see, a man isn't tied to his own bit of country, as he was in my father's time. There must be an inner circle in county society, as there practically is everywhere."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Frank, wondering where the line was to be drawn, and whether he would be placed on the right side of it.

"And, I may tell you," Lord St. Osyth went on, "that it was pleasant hearing to our friends, when the news came that you were going to settle amongst us. There was a report, at one time, that you were going to let your place."

"Oh, I never thought of doing that," said Frank.

"Men like yourself, with keen, intellectual tastes, are disposed sometimes—quite wrongly, as I hold—to fancy that they can only feel the full charm of life in London. There is a selfish view, too. Men must give out as well as absorb; and how can a man in your position make better use of his culture than in helping those less favoured about him to rise to a higher level?"

"There are several very nice new people come into your parts," Lord St. Osyth continued; "Lady Aylward and the Cropredya. Lady Aylward has a daughter who has done great things at Girton, I'm told."

"Indeed," said Frank. "I've met several Girton girls in town."

"And you've liked them, I'll be bound. That's all nonsense about high education hardening a woman. But you'll have a chance of gaining fresh experiences. The Aylwards dine with us to-morrow."

The dinner-party was a small one. Miss Aylward was a bright, clever girl, dressed like one of Titian's ladies, and with no ink-stains on her fingers. She was full of the enthusiasm of letters; and, besides this, was ready to dance all night and skate all day. Sir Francis found it vastly more pleasant to discuss Matthew Arnold's last essay, or the latest revival at the Lyceum, with her, than with Dick Short, with his shabby catchwords and machine-made criticism. And this comparison stood still more clearly in her favour when, on his return to The Latimers, he found Dick established there for a week's holiday, and the house smelling of Cavendish like—well, like Mr. Short's chambers in Clifford's Inn. Frank's manner towards his self-bidden guest was very cool; but this did not tend to hasten Dick's departure, neither did it prevent him from borrowing ten pounds from his host the morning he left. The last night of his visit he treated Frank, anew, to his ideas on the subject of the country as a place of residence; and wound up by declaring that a boy of the mettle of Frank Kedgbury would never get on with a set of jolterheads, like the people round about.

The next month Sir Francis met Miss Aylward at a county ball, and he also received a letter from Dick Short, asking for a further loan—twenty pounds, this time. Dick, in his letter, again urged his friend to come up to town. They would be able to see plenty of each other, as Harry Cross was going to marry his landlady's daughter, and would be boxed up at home, at least for a time.

The loan was sent, and the letter accompanying it was written—in terms which made Dick wish that he had asked for fifty pounds, while he was about it, for he marked that Sir Francis Kedgbury was going to take to new ways, and that his old friends were to go the way of his old

clothes. And, indeed, from this time, the young Baronet advanced towards his manifest destiny with hurrying steps. He went to church once every Sunday, unless the weather was very bad. He became the president of the Shillingsbury Athenæum, and a supporter of all those local societies to which men in his position are expected to act as buttresses.

Naturally, he married Miss Aylward—the wisest step he could possibly have taken—and quietly fell into the position he was born to occupy, as if those trifling aberrations above recorded had never been.

The moral to be drawn from the story of Francis Kedgbury's early life is, that the individual is very rarely able to resist the drift of his surroundings; and that animals, whether they be biped or quadruped, are easier led than driven. There is a tradition that when an Irish drover wants to beguile his grunting consignment on board the steamer, he seizes the curly tail and pulls back the owner thereof with all his might from the loading-gangway. Then, with a squeak and a rush, piggy resents the interference and bolts forward, to find himself in the place where his master would have him. It may savour of irreverence to contrast such a manoeuvre with Sir Thomas Kedgbury's system of education; but if, in lieu of constantly pricking Frank onward, he had pulled him back from the path in which he wanted him to walk, he would have been more likely to succeed than by working out his wonderful plan. It is probable, too, that Dick Short, by taking too much trouble to instruct Frank as to the line of life he ought to follow, may have given him a push in the direction whither the power of association and environment, and the charm of Ethel Aylward's bright eyes had already begun to draw him. And Frank himself was made of material very easily moulded, provided the hand of the worker were not too much "en évidence." Because it was, in the case of Sir Thomas and Dick Short, their efforts had miscarried. Louis and Achille, and Carl and Gustav, had a temporary success, because they worked sincerely and without design. Lord St. Osyth made the greatest success of all; but then he called to his aid a power which few young men would have been able to fight against, when he sent Miss Aylward down with Sir Francis Kedgbury at that friendly little dinner-party.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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BROWNIE'S PLOT.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "Lucy Carter."

CHAPTER I. THE NORTHCOTTS.

A JOURNEY of something less than two hours will bring you from the hurry and bustle of London to the placid calm of Middleton.

Middleton is a town of thirty thousand souls, more or less; rejoicing in a Mayor and Corporation, the half of a Member of Parliament, and other advantages too numerous and commonplace to mention. Not the least valuable of these is a long stretch of down, rising like a bulwark to protect it from the north-east winds. A few houses are scattered along its slope to leeward, the most pretentious being Eastwood, the abode of Mr. and Mrs. Northcott.

Ramour said that the first Mr. Northcott known to history had been in very humble circumstances. Ramour, however, is not always to be trusted; and no matter how Mr. Northcott began his life, he undoubtedly became the possessor of vast wealth before its conclusion. He was succeeded by his son, the present owner of the name, and of a still more valuable property: "the High Wood Brick and Tile Works."

The house could be seen from miles around, because of the high observatory which rose from one side of it; but was entirely hidden from the road immediately before its wide gates, by a thick screen of young limes. The garden sloped down towards the High Street, from which it was separated only by a few hundred yards.

One afternoon, towards the end of May, Mrs. Northcott and two girls were seated in the drawing-room. Every line of her handsome, but faded, face expressed anxiety; for Mrs. Northcott was given to create troubles as often as opportunity offered.

"You must allow, Maud, that Dr. Stanhope could not have chosen a more inconvenient time to be taken ill. He has attended your father these twenty years; and now, when he might really be of some use, he is unable to leave his room."

"I suppose it is hardly his fault, auntie," said the darker of the two girls.

This was Margaret Northcott, whose pet name was Brownie. She was not, in truth, Mrs. Northcott's niece, her father having been Mr. Northcott's first cousin; but, as she was a year younger than Maud, it had seemed fit, when she came to live at Eastwood upon her father's death, to adopt this more respectful and avuncular form of address.

Brownie exactly described her. Her hair only just escaped blackness; her complexion was that of a brunette; her eyes were hazel; whilst her forehead was so much hidden as not to need taking into account. Not that her intellectual faculties were, from a phrenological point of view, too little developed, but her thick brown hair grew unusually low down, and was so unruly as to refuse to be persuaded backwards upon any terms whatever.

Brownie's dark complexion appeared the darker by the side of her cousin Maud's, whose fair hair seemed to harmonise with her white, clear skin, which, together with a certain stateliness of manner, gave her the classical beauty of a statue.

Maud was distinguished by a somewhat severe simplicity, whilst Brownie betrayed a

tendency to, as it were, dress up to her name. Her horse was a chestnut; she wore a brown habit; so that Clement, Maud Northcott's half-brother—for he was the son of Mr. Northcott by his first wife—had described her as a "study in brown." Moreover, she was the only kind of study for which Clement showed no distaste.

"You don't think that Dr. Stanhope is malingering, mother?"

"When you have done trifling, Maud, perhaps you will listen to me," answered Mrs. Northcott, with dignity.

"I thought the topic was exhausted," said Maud, trying to dissemble a yawn. "We cannot have Dr. Stanhope; we must find some one else."

"But who is the some one to be? You can hardly expect me to call in that young man to try experiments on your poor father. If Clement were more like other sons, the responsibility would not fall so heavily upon me. At a crisis like this, I maintain he ought to be at home."

"Everybody says Mr. Anderson is clever," suggested Brownie; "he set Uncle Walter's arm very carefully. And if Dr. Stanhope had not confidence in him, he would never allow him to take his patients."

This hint was sufficient to start Mrs. Northcott on a fresh tack.

"Ah, there is another misfortune. But nobody ever knew my brother anything but unfortunate yet. To think he should break an arm the very day after his arrival. Of course, it must be the right arm. This is what I want to know. Your uncle has broken his arm three times. Now, can you tell me why it should always have been the same one? The horse is a quiet horse, too."

"Quieter than the rider!" said Brownie, sotto voce.

"I know where that comes from," exclaimed Mrs. Northcott, whose ears were of the keenest. "That is a piece of Clement's impertinence. Far more to his credit if he were to look after himself, instead of making offensive remarks about his elders! Nobody knows the anxiety that boy causes his father. And now, when his opinion might be of some use, of course he is not to be found."

"But surely there can't be any harm in his running up to London, mother. I only wish we might do the same."

Mr. Northcott indulged the girls in every way at Middleton, but would never hear of their spending a season in London. He

was a man of peculiar prejudices. Clement hunted four days a week, and no objection was offered; but once let him put in an appearance at the Hunt Steeplechases, and he would have sinned past forgiveness. After Bunyan, Shakespeare was Mr. Northcott's favourite author; he loved to quote from the plays in and out of season; yet he had never entered a theatre. The presence of a pack of cards in his house would have frightened him out of it.

"You know, as well as I do, how obstinate your dear father is about some things," sighed Mrs. Northcott. "I have nothing to say against your going to London. London, indeed! Do you know what to-day is, Maud?" and, to judge from her tone, it might have been, at least, the Day of Judgement.

"Wednesday, isn't it, Brownie?"

"But what Wednesday?" demanded her mother.

"The last Wednesday in May."

"It is the Derby day, as they call it. And at the Derby you would find Clement at this moment. And his father lying ill all the time; his objection to such scenes so well known, too! Mark my words, that boy will bring disgrace upon us yet. I could tell you things which would astonish you both. It is hardly twelve months since his father paid every one of his debts, and now he is over head and ears again."

"Are you quite sure?" asked Maud; whilst Brownie walked to the window, where she remained, staring blankly out at the garden.

"I have had my suspicions a long time," continued Mrs. Northcott, "and now I am certain. He leaves his things about just as though they were something to be proud of. Such a pile of bills I could show; and show them to his father I must. How can that boy pay them, short of money as he always is? Hundreds of pounds they come to; and all in one year! I call it disgraceful! Tailors' bills, saddlers', wine-merchants', jewellers'. Now, Margaret, you always pretend to take other persons' parts, what can a young man of four-and-twenty want with an account at a jeweller's?"

"At a jeweller's, auntie!" exclaimed Brownie, suddenly facing about.

"Pray do not repeat—yes, at a jeweller's. It all comes very hard upon me. And how am I to know that your poor uncle's arm is properly set? Yet you expect me to call in the same young man who bungled

it to try all kinds of new drugs on your father! For what we know, he may not even be respectable."

"We should hardly have met him at the Rectory, if he had not been respectable," said Maud. "Mr. Butterworth told me he had been dreadfully disappointed about his practice. There was hardly a patient to come to him, except those from the parish. Mr. Butterworth says that Mr. Anderson is an oculist."

An hour or two later Mr. Anderson was there in person. His tightly buttoned frock-coat made his spare frame the more noticeable, and lent a formality to his appearance which scarcely belonged to his character.

He stood six feet in his boots; his long face was cleanly shaven, with the exception of an inch below each ear; his complexion slightly sallow; his most striking characteristic his exceeding leanness; and it was easy to imagine those long white fingers capable of any wonders with the knife.

Having satisfied Mrs. Northcott (or the reverse) concerning every minute detail of her husband's indisposition, he was on the point of taking his leave, when he stopped on the threshold of the drawing-room.

"By-the-bye, as I am here, I may as well see my other patient."

"Ah," began Mrs. Northcott, "you can't imagine anything like my poor brother's helplessness; what with the butler to dress him, and Maud to cut up his food! Margaret, show Mr. Anderson the way to the study."

"It is too bad to trouble you," he said, as he followed her lead. "I think I could have found my way alone."

"How extremely ungrateful!" she laughed. "Do you mean to imply that books have a natural attraction for you, Mr. Anderson?"

"Well, perhaps tobacco has. The way to reach Mr. Litton is to follow your nose, and keep straight on."

Nobody ever dreamed of studying in this study of Mr. Northcott's; and, but for his enforced absence, no one would have dared to smoke there. The book-cases, chairs, writing-tables, and wainscot were all of unstained oak; the books, for the most part, as heavy as lead. Those for actual use and enjoyment came once a week in a box from London.

As Anderson entered the room he heard a drawer sharply closed and a heavy

volume as quickly opened. Mr. Litton, with his right arm in an unwieldy leather sling, rose slowly, as though he left his book with the most profound regret.

"Didn't hear you at first," he said, bringing his left hand down heartily to Anderson's. "Deep in a book, you see; only way to kill time. By the way, have you seen the boss? I guess I'll be healed before he is, eh?"

Mr. Walter Litton was below the average height, and inclined to be stout. His clothes hung about him loosely, and he had a habit of thrusting his hands in the top of his trousers, which never came quite up to the bottom of his waistcoat. His hair was as black as Anderson's, only much thicker and longer. A pair of somewhat thick lips protruded beneath a short moustache; his teeth were remarkably small and even, but as black as coal. There was an oiliness about his face which seemed to suit his exuberance of manner, and it was unpleasant to touch his hand.

"I am not at all sure about that," said Anderson. "What is it that interests you so deeply?"

"It's—about—er—something in Greek," was the embarrassed answer.

"You are fond of the classics?" said Anderson, raising his eyebrows. He leaned forward to look at the open page and added with a laugh: "You are out of it this time; this is a volume of Schiller's plays."

Anderson's laugh was nothing to Mr. Litton's.

"They say you should never disguise anything from your lawyer or your doctor," he roared. "Duced good reason; they know it's no use trying, eh? No; what little Greek I had is as dead as the language. As for German—give me French. When I heard the door open, I thought it was one of the girls. Girls are such prigs; show them a French novel and away they run like a shot—to the nearest library, eh, Anderson? Well, when am I to get these confounded splints off?"

"With your unfortunate experience, I suppose you knew it won't be just yet, as well as I do," was the answer.

"Perhaps I do. Yes, it's my third turn of it. The first time I fell from a pear-tree. Only a bony, then. Next time I tumbled down a mine in Nevada. A close shave, that. What do you call it? Comminuted compound smash, eh? Laid me by the

heels best part of a year. That was ten years ago now, just after I had got back from my last visit to England."

"You do not come home very often, then?"

"This is only the second time in twenty years. Quite often enough. I don't believe in making myself too cheap. If it had not been for this, I should have been at Epsom. Why aren't you there, Doctor? My young scamp of a nephew has gone, you bet. A nice row if the boss heard of it. Pretty swift, my nephew, isn't he?"

"He seems to enjoy his life," Anderson admitted.

"He has knocked up a nice little reputation for himself."

"I dare say. It is not difficult to manage that in Middleton."

"They say he is going to the devil, and from what I can see, he's going on horseback," said Mr. Litton, and Anderson left him to pursue his studies in whatever language he might prefer.

CHAPTER II. CLEMENT NORTHCOTT.

ASSOCIATED for a long time with Mr. Northcott in the management of the brick works, had been Mr. Grayson, who, during recent years, had become his partner. Mr. Grayson's son was ten years older than Clement, and the two fathers often laid their heads together, looking forward to the time when the boys might reign in their stead. Mr. Grayson had gone over to the majority two years ago; his son Henry becoming, from that time, Mr. Northcott's partner and right-hand man.

A yet closer connection had more than once been hinted at, for, devoted as Henry Grayson was to business, he yet found time to bestow many thoughts upon Brownie; and, although he had spoken no word of his love and hopes, Mr. Northcott had encouraged them, and she, at least, had not repelled his advances.

So Mr. Grayson's expectations had been more than realised, whilst Mr. Northcott's promised nothing but disappointment. Clement was supposed to enter a daily appearance at the Works; but this was a very wild supposition indeed. When he felt inclined—which was seldom—he would drive to High Wood for an hour. When he felt disinclined—which was often—he stayed away. Not that he had any objection to the Works in particular: he disliked work in general; whilst it is possible that Henry

Grayson preferred his room to his erratic company.

Clement Northcott was passing rich on two hundred pounds a year, which sum he had inherited—his sister and Brownie being equally fortunate—at the death of the first Mr. Northcott before-mentioned.

It was surprising to observe how much he did with this modest income. If he had chosen to put his shoulder to the wheel in earnest, he might have increased it tenfold; but Mr. Northcott went upon the principle of "no work no pay," and, accordingly did not make his son a regular allowance. He might just as well have done so, for, twice already, he had found it necessary to pay Clement's debts.

These occasions were both vividly remembered. Mr. Northcott had gnashed his teeth; Mrs. Northcott had wept; Clement and every one else had passed a sufficiently-bad quarter of an hour.

Although he had the run of his father's stables, Clement loved a speculation on horseflesh on his own account. He prided himself not a little upon his knowledge of the noble animal, whose friends are often not so noble.

Clement was a member of a little club in London, where play sometimes ran high. He had no particular love for play; but used to take the lead at Middleton; and when he went to Rome he wished to act like the other young Romans.

"Surely a fellow may do as he likes with his own!" he would soliloquise à propos of his two hundred pounds a year.

The best of men have their detractors, and, without being one of the best of men, Clement Northcott had his. In his presence it was difficult to feel anything but satisfaction. He carried his faults in a manner so *débonnaire* that they seemed to be virtues, and to become him exceedingly. His hearty grip of the hand, his gay laugh, his bright face, were as exhilarating as a glass of champagne; but the exhilaration was often followed by reaction; graybeards would shake their old heads solemnly and prophesy dismally concerning his future.

"I do wish Clement would not whistle directly he enters the house," exclaimed Mrs. Northcott, on the afternoon following Anderson's first visit. "His poor father trying to sleep, too!"

The door was flung unceremoniously open, and Clement entered the room. An inch or two shorter than Anderson, he would have scaled a stone heavier. In

perfect condition, an adept at every manly sport, he presented that thoroughbred appearance which we expect in healthy young Englishmen who have nothing to do—or, at any rate, who do nothing—but amuse themselves. Nearly as fair as Maud, his face was tanned until it almost matched his small moustache. His manner was too careless and unstudied for that of a fop; yet Clement was very well dressed, albeit his taste ran in favour of large patterns, and strange and fearful mixtures of red, yellow, and green.

"Well, mother; well, girls. What's the best news?" he said, making straight for Mrs. Northcott's chair.

"The usual Middleton budget, Clem," replied Maud.

"Too exciting to be heard all at once, then? I suppose the pater's all right?"

"Your father is extremely unwell," said Mrs. Northcott, with great solemnity, "very unwell, indeed; and, to add to my troubles, Dr. Stanhope is unable to attend him."

"Poor old governor! Can I go up and see him? By-the-bye, why don't you have the fellow I fetched to Uncle Wal?"

"I never could feel the least confidence in a medical man after hearing him called a fellow, Clement!" cried Mrs. Northcott.

"Oh, well," said Clement, who was nothing if not accommodating, "say chap, man, gentleman—anything you like, mother."

"Mr. Anderson has been called in——" began Maud.

"No, Maud, I consider he has been thrust in," expostulated her mother.

"Well," said Clement, "I'm off to see the pater. Oh—I forgot—how is Uncle Wal? I'll look him up on my way downstairs."

After a short absence, Clement returned to find Brownie and Maud alone.

"I say, the governor does look seedy, doesn't he? Where has Uncle Wal got to? He isn't in his room."

"You will find him in the study," said Brownie.

"What a wretched nuisance! Can't one of you girls go and rout him out?"

"You don't mean to insinuate that you have a desire to study, Clem?" was Maud's demure answer.

"You girls are very well in your way," he retorted, "only just now you are in my way, too. A fellow must be alone sometimes."

Words scarcely noticed at the time, but

destined, for all their unimportance, to be bitterly remembered afterwards, when one of his hearers, at least, had no doubt as to his reason for wishing to be alone.

"Brownie," repeated Clement, "go and rout him out, there's a good girl."

Without a murmur she went to do his bidding; but Maud remained to expostulate.

"You might just as well stay and sit with us, Clem."

"All right, Maud, I shan't be long. It is really important; honour bright. I am going in for a kind of audit, you know."

Brownie's reappearance hindered Maud from retorting.

"Uncle Walter says he is not well now; he is going to bed."

"The devil was ill, the devil a monk would be," exclaimed Clement. "Brownie, you're a brick. A couple of hours, and I shall be ready for anything you like—from thought-reading to puss-in-the-corner."

"Very well," said Brownie. "Then to find out all about this industrious spirit which has possessed you—whether it be of Heaven or——"

But if her sentence had an end, it was lost in Clement's laugh.

The next morning—it was the last Friday in May—Mr. Litton appeared at the breakfast-table in the best of spirits, despite his indisposition of the previous night and his lame arm.

The room opened on to the garden, where you could see the rhododendrons already in flower, and enjoy the scent of the blossoming May. Clement's St. Bernard lay on the hearthrug, eagerly watching his master's hand on its journeys to his mouth. Clement himself was gorgeous in a plaid dressing-suit, elaborately braided and befrogged.

Brownie, in her white cotton frock, looked as fresh and pure as the flowers which she had just plucked, and which still held the dew-drops on their petals; whilst Maud's pink dress seemed to be designed expressly to make a fair girl more fair.

"Of course you are going to the Works this morning, Clement," said Mrs. Northcott.

"What, and the pater so seedy!" he exclaimed; whereupon there was a general laugh—nobody as yet experiencing the least anxiety about Mr. Northcott's condition. "No," continued Clement, "I must wait to see Anderson."

"What are you going to do then?" enquired Maud.

"In the first place," he answered, as he rose, "Uncle Wal and I are going in the garden for a cigarette. Here, you poor cripple, let me give you an arm."

"You must give me a light, too, my boy. I feel as helpless as a two weeks' infant. Call that brute away from my legs, will you?"

Mr. Litton was not a favourite with Léon.

"That cigarette will take at least an hour, Brownie," said Maud, when the two girls were alone, "afterwards we will insist upon tennis, and accept no excuses."

"All right. I shall just have time to finish this book. I ought to let Henry have it back to-day."

"How is it we have seen so little of Henry Grayson lately, Brownie?"

"Why do you ask me?" she enquired, ingenuously. "I am sure I don't know."

"He has not been here for a fortnight. Not since that evening at the Rectory—the night we first met Mr. Anderson."

Brownie applied herself to the book, without answering; but no sooner had Maud left the room, than the volume was allowed to rest face downwards upon her knees. For she knew well enough that she had accepted from Anderson, on this occasion, attentions which Grayson had come to regard as his prerogative. Without sufficient reason, doubtless, he had come so to regard them. It could hardly be said that Brownie had given Henry undue encouragement. A light-hearted, impulsive girl, without, until this time, many serious thoughts upon any subject whatever, she loved to amuse herself in her own way; and, to any one less painfully in earnest than Grayson, it was not likely to prove a very dangerous way.

"What's the matter, Brownie?" exclaimed Clement, suddenly disturbing the current of her thoughts.

"I thought you were still in the garden," she said, with a start.

"I thought you were a thousand miles away," he retorted. "No, I have just left Uncle Wal in the study. Maud said something about tennis; I'll go and get into my flannels."

But, before the accomplishment of this important transformation, Mr. Anderson was announced; and, slipping on his white jacket, Clement hastened down to speak to him.

DOMESDAY BOOK.

Two years ago was the eight hundredth anniversary of the completion of the Domesday survey; and the Royal Historical Society improved the occasion by holding a conference, to which almost every English archaeological society sent up its delegates. Delegates came also from the States, and from Canada and Australia; and the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries—mindful that the Normans were by origin Northmen—sent one of its foremost members; while M. Delisle, Director of the Paris National Library, a veteran student of Domesday, gave a new Norman charter.

Indeed, everybody helped, except the Norman Antiquarian Societies, jealous, perhaps, that the Conference was not held at Caen or Falaise, instead of in London. Hence resulted a great exhibition of records, for there are several local Domesdays—the splendid "Exeter Book," written in much the same neat Italian hand as Domesday itself; the "Inquest of Cambridge," which is probably the only surviving original return of the "jurators," or sworn surveyors, appointed for every county; the Cottonian MS., for Kent, a small handy roll meant for the pocket; the Arundel MS., for twenty-four counties, which belonged to Margam Abbey, in Glamorgan; the "Breviate"—a twelfth century MS.—with its fly-leaves covered with Welsh prophecies and myths about Merlin, and lists of the burial-places of saints:

Gre perlarat cest ecort
Des sayns ou sunt ensevelis
En Engleterre par parties.

This, too, must have belonged to a Welsh Abbey; while the other abridgement, the "Abbreviatio": compiled early in Edward the First's reign, written not in an Italian, but a native hand, and with illuminated capitals—a bit of extravagance not indulged in in any of the others—and heads or half-length portraits on gold ground of the chief tenants, and adorned on its fly-leaves with six pictures of Edward the Confessor's life, which are said to be as early as Henry the First's time; seems from these illustrations to have belonged to Westminster Abbey.

It is curious—as Mr. Hyde Clarke pointed out in one of the lectures given during the Conference in the Hall of Lincoln's Inn—that for a parallel to Domesday we must go to countries under Turkish

rule. Here, every headman of a village knows all such particulars as are given in our Domesday, and the records—indispensable as a basis for taxation—are kept in the capitals of districts.

Such a register is called a "defter," and "defterdar" is the officer of an administrative division.

Professor Vambéry quotes such a survey of Hungary, made during the old Turkish occupation, which gives particulars of every peasant's land—its quality as well as its quantity—and even of the fruit trees and of the "honey trees" in the forests.

In Turkey, as with us in Domesday, the holdings correspond to the ploughs—land, it itself, was almost valueless. There, too, till the destructive reforms of Sultan Mahmoud, the Feudal Barons had their counterparts in the "timariots," holders of "timars" (fiefs), which they divided among their relations, who formed the military class. Such a survey gave the King a list of men responsible for the defence of the country, while it prevented the tenants from encroaching on one another. Indeed, our Book is full of "clamores," that is, complaints of the wronged, and "invasiones," or notes of somebody's intrusion into another's domain.

There had been earlier surveys. The Doom-books of Ælfred and Æthelstan, etc., were books of judgements; but three years ago there was discovered, on the fly-leaf of an Ælfrie's Latin Grammar, a tenth century list of names and acreage—Myrcna (Mercia), thirty thousand hides; Cantwarena (Kent) fifteen thousand; West Saxena, ten thousand, etc.—possibly based on that survey made by "Dyfnal, son of Clydno, who measured all Great Britain before the Crown of London and the Lordship of this island were seized by the Saxons." Our survey leaves out the four northern counties; for Durham and Northumberland had been so cruelly wasted after the murder of Bishop Walcher that there could have been little of value to put down. Of Cumberland and Westmoreland the southern parts were reckoned in Yorkshire; for the northern, belonging to the British kingdom of Strathclyde, the Scotch Kings did homage till William Rufus joined them to England, transplanting to Carlisle many of those whose homes were destroyed in making the New Forest. Lancashire, too, had not yet been formed into a county. The Book surveys Salfordshire and Blackburnshire as part of Cheshire; Furness and Amounderness

belonged to the West Riding. Rutland has no existence in the Book; half of it is surveyed under Lincoln, the other half under Northampton. The first thing to note is the terrible falling off in population, and therefore in tillage, since the good days of the Confessor (marked T. E. R. in the Book, *tempore regis Edwardi*). In the parish of Pickering the ploughed land had gone down from seventy-four thousand acres to twelve hundred. In Knapton, near York, under Edward, eleven hundred acres were tilled. When the survey was made all was desolate, seemingly without a single inhabitant. We must not think that all the tilled land was enclosed. In Pickering all but four hundred acres were tilled in common fields; in Knapton only twenty acres were enclosed. Rent was usually paid in kind or in services, the farmer being he who supplied "feorm," food and entertainment to the lord when he visited the manor. When there was no other payment, the "scat penny," as it was called, varied from a penny to fourpence an acre. The common land being tilled in strips or balks, the produce of every tenth strip went to the priest. Till the enclosure, some fifty years ago, the glebe in Burton Agnes, Canon Isaac Taylor's parish, was made up in this way; and the whole parish lay in open fields. Totternhoe, near Dunstable, was so farmed till 1886. In most cases the old tilled land, the best in the parish, has gone back to valuable pasture, still marked with the run-rigs, or selions, a furlong long and a perch broad, and two feet high, just as they were left by the Domesday co-operative ploughs. Worse land, formerly unreclaimed, now forms most of our tilled fields.

To understand either Domesday, or any of the books that treat of it, one must know something of the words employed. Acre is the Latin *ager* (field), and had no specific reference to size, though in Edward the First's time the ideal acre was a rectangle forty perches (or a furlong, furrow-long) long by four wide. A bovat is a very common measure in Domesday. It clearly means as much as an ox could till in the year, and thus would differ on different soils. The carucate is what the plough (that is, team of four oxen on light, of eight on heavy land) could manage in a year, and varied from sixty to a hundred of our acres. Oldest of all is the hide, which occurs in the laws of Ina (A.D. 620). All sorts of fanciful meanings have been given for it. Classical scholars have

connected it with the old story told of so many towns that, being granted only so much land as he could enclose in an ox-hide, a crafty leader cut his hide into narrow strips, and so got a fair quantity. Alfred translates the Latin *familia* by *hydeland*; and as a measure it was what one plough (all that a group of householders in the olden time possessed) could get through in the year. Hence it should be the same as the *carucate*; but the quantity practically varies with the goodness, easiness to work, and situation, convenient or otherwise, of the land.

Equally irregular and uncertain was the *virgate*, which, in a charter of 1200 A.D., is fixed at a quarter of the hide. In the Battle Abbey register there are eight *virgates* to the hide. The whole arrangement was on a sliding scale, depending on the nature of the soil: poor, rough land being—as in an Irish lease—thrown in without stint; good land being carefully measured. Wood, too, was carefully measured; it was valuable both for fuel, and also for pannage—pig feeding on beechmast and acorns. Where, as in parts of Kent, lands had no wood, they were provided with dens—word still preserved in *Deepdene*, and other village names—or pig-feeding tracts, often far away. But forest-land, not being enquired into for assessment, is like church-land, only incidentally mentioned; and only one, the New Forest, was specially surveyed for the Record. A proof at once of the destruction wrought in forming this forest, and of the elastic size of the hide, is, that from two hundred and eighteen hides, the district was reduced to seventy-six. The acreage remained the same; the number of families it could support was reduced to a third.

Park is perhaps a Celtic word, denoting a piece of ground hedged off for the game to be kept in. The hundred, much older than Alfred, may have consisted of a hundred hides, or it may have been the district, which, containing a hundred households, would be bound to furnish one hundred men to the *Militia*. In Lincoln and Nottingham it got to be called *Wapentake* (weapon-teaching), its men being wont to meet for training.

Manor, of course, is *manoir*, the place where the lord usually remains. The creation of manors went on till the statute of "*quia emptores*" stopped it in the eighteenth year of Edward the First. The persistence of Domesday manor-names is remarkable. They are found, clipped and

disfigured, in the names of fields, houses, and so on, where the manor itself has long ceased to have any existence.

We must not think that the whole land changed hands. The survey, made twenty years after Hastings, contains Saxon and Danish names. *Turchil*, of Wilts, held the land his father had held before him; *Turchil*, of Warwick (alias of Arden), must have been specially favoured, for he held seventy-one manors, whereas his father, *Alwine*, the Sheriff, only held four. *Rufus*, however, destroyed the short-lived prosperity of the family—took from *Turchil's* son, *Siward*, nearly all the manors, and made him hold the remainder under the Earl of Warwick. *Teodric*, the Surrey goldsmith, kept the land which he had held from Edward the Confessor. So did *Ulketel*, of Norfolk, descendant of him who stood against the Danes; or he may be the very man, and his stand may not have been against Danes but against encroaching lords of manors. Anyhow, the Marshland hero, now known as *Tom Hickathrift*, "who made a brave stand against some person or persons unknown," is supposed to have been an *Ulketel*. Again, *Osbarn*, son of *Richard*, held his lands, though they were in five counties. His father had built a castle in Herefordshire, and, therefore, probably was Normanised more or less. There are many more—*Aluric*, *Siwards*, *Oawolds*, *Swains*, who, having been tenants "*in capite*," still held their land.

But their total number, about five hundred, is small, compared with the number of the dispossessed. *Ailric*, for instance, held *Kelvedon*, in *Essex*. He went to sea to fight the Norman invaders, and, returning, fell ill. Whereupon, he gave his land to *St. Peter's Abbey*, *Westminster*. But *Domesday* expressly says the monks have no charter to confirm their right. Now, there are two charters extant—one of Edward the Confessor, confirming *Ailric's* gift long before he is supposed to have given it; and another, of *William*, also confirming the gift, and referring to the Confessor's confirmation. Of course, *Childe Alnod*, or *Ulnoth*, *Harold's* younger brother, lost his lands. *Alnod* was a hostage in Normandy, when *William* sailed across. *Asgar the Haller*—that is, master of the horse—was a great landowner, into whose possessions *Geoffrey of Mandeville* entered. *Brihtric* held this honour of Gloucester, and many manors besides. His fate was a very hard one.

Maud, daughter of Count Baldwin, of Flanders, fell in love with him when he was Ambassador at her father's court. He would none of her; and now, as Queen of William, she used her power to get all his lands confiscated, and himself imprisoned at Winchester. Edric the Savage (Silvaticus) seems to have had better luck than landowners in more settled parts. Dispossessed by the Castellans of Hereford, and Osbern Scrot (Scroto), son of Richard, the Normanised Thane aforesaid, he leagued with the Welsh chiefs, Bethgert and Ritwald, wasted Herefordshire as far as the Lugg, and carried off a vast booty.

Here is a glimpse of light. One can contrast Edric the stout old Saxon with Osbern, his renegade countryman. In "Ivanhoe," we have the materials for building up, as it were, the two men who must have been so wholly alike. But this is a rare case. Most of the names, both of the dispossessed and of the lucky few who held on, are mere names for us.

All we can suppose is that, while the former had been out at Hastings, or had sent aid to Harold, the latter had failed to help their country at the fatal crisis. Gurth, of course, lost his head, though, whether he was killed at Hastings by his brother's side, as the Bayeux tapestry tells the tale, or, whether "the Romance of King Harold" is to be believed, is uncertain. The "Romance" says that Harold was found, not by the Swan-neck, but by two monks; and was, by the skill of a Saracen woman, cured of his wounds!

Gurth also escaped, says the "Romance," and lived to a great age, and had speech with Henry the Second and with the nobles of his time. Five Siwards lost their heads, and Uchtreds innumerable, and several Siberts; from one of whom is named Shepherd's Well, in Kent. From another, perhaps, Shepherd's Bush, in West London. Brixi, another of the dispossessed, is supposed to be the name-father of Brixton. Fancy the Brixton Bon Marché being, perhaps, on the site of the old Thane's wooden hall!

Many noble Saxons found a refuge in monasteries: Waltheof, son of Cospatric, Earl of Northumberland—not the Waltheof who married Judith and afterwards rebelled against his wife's uncle (the paucity of Saxon names is confusing)—became the Abbot of Croyland. Harold's admiral was abbot of Saint Benet Holme, of which, to this day, the Bishop of Norwich is Abbot. Elsi, Abbot of Ramsey, had been

a courtier of Edward the Confessor. Sometimes their daughters were married to the Norman interlopers; sometimes these got the land without the "incumbrance."

A deal has been made of the lament in the Saxon Chronicle over the harsh minuteness of the assessors: "Not an ox, nor a cow, nor a swine, but it was set down in the writing." Except in the three eastern counties—its survey of which is seemingly a transcription in full of the original returns—the Exchequer Domesday only gives the live-stock on the manors, and says nothing of the property of the peasants. This is proved by a comparison with those earlier surveys, the Exeter Domesday and the "Inquest of the county of Cambridge," in which the whole live-stock of the county is enumerated.

The King did not want to know this, at least for taxing purposes. He had to do only with the lords of manors; the peasants were answerable not to him, but to their over-lords.

The Saxon chronicler relates how the King, in 1085, at Gloster, in mid-winter, held his court. "And very deep speech held he with his witan about this land: how it was peopled, and by what men. Then sent he his men over all England, into every shire, and caused to be ascertained . . . and what dues he ought to have in twelve months from the shire." And next year, at the close of the survey, he received at Sarum the submission of all the chief landowners to military tenure—the formal establishment, that is, of the feudal system—they becoming his men, and compacting to be faithful to him both within and without the realm. The Commissioners had not much time for their work; hence, no doubt, their free use of earlier surveys. Their record is not free from manifest errors. The Italian scribes (Lanfranc's men, probably) misspelt several of the names; but on the whole it is a wonderful testimony how well William was served. He was just one of those men who, by force of character, secure good service.

The name, Domesday, occurs as early as the middle of the twelfth century; dooms (dome-) were laws in old English—Ælfred's code is his domboec. On the other hand, domes-day is used in the Saxon gospels, and in Canute's laws, and also in Cæimon, for the day of judgement. In its colophon Domesday Book calls itself "Descriptio," and other titles were "Rotulus Wintoniæ" (the Winchester

Roll, from the place where it was first kept), "Liber Regis" (King's book), etc. In regard to taxation, the survey incidentally shows how very unfair it was to the towns. These all had to pay the same as they paid in Edward the Confessor's time; though, in almost every case, they were decayed. In Shrewsbury, for instance, Earl Roger de Montgomery's castle occupied the site of fifty-one houses, and fifty others were lying waste. This performance of old usage is seen in the enforcement of the "trinoda necessitas"—triple charge laid on all landowners all through Anglo-Saxon times. It was for the repair of bridges, the keeping up of the local fortress, and the supply of men for the army. Sometimes the maintenance of the old custom was a distinct advantage to the English; thus, at Dover, whoever paid his customary rent to the King was free of toll throughout England. Feudalism does not seem to have quite killed out private ownership of land. "Alodarii," holders in allodium (all lot) or fee simple, are mentioned in Kent and Berks. At the other end of the scale would be the "servi" ("theows," the villeins answering to "ceorls"). They get either wages or food at the discretion of their masters. Equally under their lord's hand were the "ancillæ"—female slaves. Very numerous—upwards of eighty-two thousand, almost, that is, a third of the total population—were the "bordarii"—probably from "bord," a boarded hut, so named in King Eadgar's Charter. In some counties they are called "cotarii"—cottagers. They had, in return for their cottage, to give the lord eggs, poultry, and such small dues, and also to give taak work—often one day a week. Towns had certain duties to the King, which they might redeem by money payments, the amount of which shows what a fancy price was set on certain articles; thus, while a horse was only worth twenty shillings, a hawk—in training which, probably, a deal of time had to be spent—was reckoned at ten pounds.

And so, from this old survey, we get some idea of what the England of that day was like, and how great was the change when the Normans came in. A comparison between William's Domesday and that begun for several counties in the present reign, would be instructive. It was a surprise to many to find how very many small proprietors there are now; but many of them own nothing but a house. Many will be astonished to find

that, in 1086, eleven proprietors held four thousand two hundred and forty-two manors; the King owning one thousand four hundred and twenty-two; the Earl of Mortaign seven hundred and ninety-three; Alan, Earl of Brittany, four hundred and forty-two; the De Laers, between them, one hundred and eighty. Probably the lowest stratum of society was scarcely touched at all; it would matter little to Wamba whether he was "born thrall of Cedric the Saxon," or the "servus" of Cedric's supplanter. The Cedrics were not always good masters; for one thing, they were slave-dealers, which the Normans are not accused of being. Young male thralls they sold to Ireland; in girls there was a traffic with Denmark.

I do not know under what conditions Domesday Book, since 1697 in the Record Office—its old place having been in the Exchequer—can be seen. It will be long before any one again has the chance of seeing all the partial surveys collected in one place. Before then, they will, doubtless, all be multiplied by photography. Let us hope that none of them will share the fate which befell the chief Domesday. Twenty years ago, it was taken to Southampton to be photographed, and there despoiled of its old binding—a part of its life history—and rebound in a new-fangled style. May none of the other books ever suffer from such Vandalism!

IN A COUNTRY TOWN OF CHILI.

CONTRASTING prettily with the brown, metal-bearing mountains, which rise in glaring nakedness all round, La Serena lies in a green and sheltered valley, through which a small river winds down to the noble Bay of Coquimbo, close by.

Never was a town more appropriately named. Except in the "winter" months—which have little of our notions of winter in them—when an occasional "norther" brings with its short, blustering gales a few welcome showers of rain, the sun shines down through a cloudless sky from year's end to year's end; its heat so tempered by the almost constant south wind blowing softly into the Bay, that enervating drowsiness is dispelled by day and sleep invited in the cool nights. Just outside the tropics, La Serena enjoys many tropical gifts, with few tropical disadvantages. Its climate, serene as the quiet

valley, approaches as near perfection as climate can.

The straggling suburbs of the town border upon the sea-shore, whence the ground, gradually, but in a curiously distinct series of plateaux—marking ancient sea-levels—rises to the mountains above. A broad beach of sand stretches round the bay with a splendid sweep, and upon it the blue Pacific beats in a succession of white rollers, which forbid landing, or even the construction of a pier.

La Serena, in consequence, has its harbour, Coquimbo, within the shelter of the southern horn of the Bay, nine miles distant. Standing on the beach here, we can see the promontory stretching out into the dim sea, resembling a miniature Gibraltar, with the white houses of the little sea-port town clinging to its steep sides; the masts of the shipping clear-cut against its barren yellow rocks.

A broad road leads from the beach, whereon we stand, into La Serena. On our right as we walk up it, is a plain of grassy fields, merging into a marsh, patched with reed-lined water-pools; which, again, as it approaches Coquimbo, merges into sand and rocks. On our left, the plain is varied with slight signs of homely cultivation, with isolated huts, and, at a distance, with a thick grove of eucalyptus. As we near the town, our road, which has gradually been becoming smoother, is shaded by trees on either side.

Just as we fairly arrive within the regions of general habitation, a railway-line—unprotected by gates—crosses the road, passing through the marshes to Coquimbo. The railway station is close by, on our left: a picturesque place, surrounded with an ill-kept garden of flowers. Opposite to it—where the line disappears on our right—stands an equally picturesque building under the trees, devoted to the brewing of country ale.

And now, walking on from this point, our road resolves itself into a beautiful Alameda, or public promenade, bounded by a double line of trees on each side, shading the smooth, wide walk. Under them are seats, on which a few idlers lounge—enjoying, as Chilians do enjoy, the luxury of doing nothing—or children play, from independent limbs of the people, bare-legged and brown-skinned, to nurse-fettered scions of the local aristocracy, dressed in French fashion, ornate and high-booted. But for these, the Alameda, in this early part of the day, is empty. At

night, however, when the town band is playing, and the moon is shining down through the trees, it is gay with many promenaders, and presents a lively Spanish scene.

Houses of varying pretensions border the Alameda behind the trees. At its upper end, the streets of the town are reached, and beauty yields to commerce. The streets are roughly paved, and dirty; the houses, painted white, or of pale tints, are plain and rectangular, their smooth walls broken only by light verandahs before the upper windows, and by the flagstaffs projecting over every door. The shops are poor. But the street scenes are interesting enough. Creaking waggons, drawn by oxen, lumber noisily over the stones, the dark skins and high cheek-bones of their drivers showing Indian descent. Lighter horse-drawn carts and shabby hackney coaches pass by, but very few respectable private carriages are seen. Outside a saddler's shop stands the picturesque figure of a "Huaso," mounted on a small but strong and spirited horse. The "Huaso" is a distinctive personage of Chili, answering somewhat to the Gaucho of Eastern South America. He spends his life mounted on his horse, which he manages with consummate skill; his occupation—when he has one—usually being cattle-driving on the "haciendas," or farms, of the country. More than half-Indian, dark, silent, fierce, he is an unpleasant individual to meet at night in a lonely country road, for he is unscrupulous and ready with his knife, especially when, as is frequently the case, he has imbibed a quantity of "aquadiente" in the low drinking-places of the town. A wide hat of well-worn straw shades his unshaven face; a "poncho"—in appearance like a striped blanket, with a hole in its centre, through which his head emerges—conceals his shabby dress. From his heels project monstrous spurs, cruel as the powerful bit which renders his horse obedient to a touch. At his saddle of Mexican pattern, hangs the "lazo," his implement of office, in the use of which he is astonishingly dexterous. His high, leather boots rest in gigantic wooden stirrups—blocks of carved wood—which protect his feet from the press of cattle.

With downcast eyes a priest strides along the rough pavement, his black shovel-hat and cassock dusty, his chin half-shaved. He is not saluted with alacrity as he passes, for the priesthood is neither popular nor powerful in Chili. The

priests are not, as a rule, drawn from the best classes of the people, and are seldom of high education or learning.

The women we pass have their heads shrouded in the national "manto," a hood or cloak of thin black stuff, larger and more unbecoming than the graceful "mantilla" of Spain. It is usually worn by women of the lower classes, and invariably by women of all ranks for church-going. Beauty among the Chilians is rare. Among the people we meet, are types of very various complexions, from darkest brown to fairest red and white, according to the greater or less admixture of Indian blood with Spanish, or to station of life. The entirely pure Indian is not seen in this part of the country, and indeed, like most other aborigines, is becoming extinct.

Some of the small houses, tenanted by the poorer portion of the populace, are exceedingly dirty; and one can hardly feel surprise at the quick spread of disease among them, a fact proved with fatal effect by the late epidemic of cholera in Chili. Sitting in the doorway of some of these squalid abodes, women may be seen, as we pass by, holding a small gourd in their hands, from which a liquor is imbibed by a tube. This liquor is "maté," a herb which may be called the tea of South America, and is largely consumed by the poor. Its taste is not unpleasant, and slightly aromatic, but in no way resembles that of tea. It is invariably drunk in the manner described, by means of a tube plunged among the herb-leaves, upon which boiling water has been poured.

We shortly arrive at a church of dark-brown stone, evidently one of the oldest buildings in the town. Entering, we see the usual mixture of extreme plainness, with an almost childish tawdriness. Daubs of sacred subjects adorn the plastered walls here and there. A great crucifix hangs near the pulpit, with a life-size painted figure of our Lord upon it, which has been clothed by some devout person with a short skirt of pink muslin, trimmed with a gold edging—resembling the dress of a "danseuse"—an outrage upon taste that is literally shocking, though probably committed with all reverence. In dim corners of the building, and by the plain pillars, kneel the shrouded forms of pious women, who constitute the chief portion of a Chilian congregation, religion among the men being rare.

We pass out of the church, and, walking on, soon arrive at the "plaza"—the public

square to be found in every Spanish town. It is small, but full of shading trees and beautiful flowers, growing in untended profusion. This fertility of the soil is surprising to a visitor whose first impression of this part of the country is that of dearth of vegetation. But this dearth is due to lack of water and infrequent rains. Wherever water can moisten the grateful ground, a garden upstarts. Water, however, is scarce, except in the towns and close to the river banks; and thus the country, really rich, is apparently sterile. Here, in the fragrant square, are seats where the indolent may dream under the trees to the cool plash of the fountain in the centre, and the humming of bees and "whiz" of dragon flies among the flowers. The quiet "plaza" is typical of the whole town. The busiest streets have little noise; the by-streets are silent.

We enter an hotel for luncheon, or, properly speaking, in Chili, breakfast. The building is dingy and ill-kept; its rooms scantily furnished, but clean. Like most of the better buildings of the town, it is square-shaped, enclosing a courtyard called the "patio," in which a few flowers grow neglected. Some of the houses, in the less dense parts of the town, have, beyond this "patio," a garden, enclosed by high walls which hide it from the public view of the streets.

The manner of serving meals in the Chilian hotel is not at all according to English ideas of comfort. A vast succession of courses is hastened through with inconvenient speed, each being placed on the table directly its predecessor has been commenced upon. The viands themselves are good; meat, vegetables, and fruit are abundant and cheap, and the country wines and ale are excellent. The cost of living in Chili is absurdly small. One can live comfortably in a country hotel like this on five or six shillings a day.

In the afternoon we sally forth to call, for the first time, on the local "lady of fashion." The house is large, facing a quiet side-street. We knock at the knockless door, and a slatternly olive-skinned maid appears, who conducts us to an empty drawing-room, thence precipitately retiring. "Gringos"—as the English are for some unknown reason termed by the Chilians—being to her lowly mind objects of some awe. While waiting for the Señora to appear, we notice that the room lacks the appearance of comfort characteristic of an English drawing-room. The furniture

is good—even grand—but disposed stiffly ; the walls are garnished with mirrors and with pictures displaying an entire absence of artistic taste.

Soon our hostess enters. She is a good type of the lady of Chili ; short, plump, dark-eyed and black-haired ; her rounded face has lost much of its original whiteness. She is dressed in black ; an almost invariable rule among the more elderly ladies of the country. She seats herself, after a smiling welcome greeting, on a couch or backed-settee placed against the middle of one of the walls, usually a place of honour, where the hostess sits with a favoured guest. The remaining seats are placed with over much precision round the room. The Señora is shortly followed by her two daughters ; excellent representatives of Chilian beauty, as their mother doubtless once was. The hair and eyes constitute their chief charm, both being brilliant and dark. Their complexions are delicately fair, but suggestive of the aid of art ; cosmetics, in fact, are largely used by the ladies of Chili, apparently without concealment. The Señoritas are dressed in French fashions, which are closely followed in Chili in all their gaiety of colour, abundance of appendage, and absurdity of construction and protuberance. The quieter English taste appears to be less popular.

Conversation freely flows, for the ladies of Chili, though generally superficial and insincere, are, in conversation and social intercourse, pleasant and lively ; and, unlike their husbands and brothers, especially friendly to the English. Our linguistic shortcomings are treated with indulgent politeness. In spite of the numbers of English in the country, few Chilians speak English, or other foreign languages ; and even their own Castilian is extremely slovenly. It is not difficult to gather, from our conversation, that the life of a fair "Chilena" in the country is circumscribed and uneventful. Gossip of the very lightest description forms the staple of talk. Events outside Chili—indeed, outside her own town—interest her little. Her knowledge of literature is confined to Spanish novels and poems ; of the arts, to a certain amount of operatic and dance music. Her amusements are small : a visit to her friends for gossip or music, a walk to the Alameda or Plaza to hear the band, a little shopping, and now and then a ball, or a poor opera by a travelling company. Out-of-door exercise she does not understand ; lawn-tennis is regarded

as one of the eccentricities of the "Gringo."

Liqueurs are handed round, and drunk with some ceremony. Five o'clock tea is, unhappily, not yet known to the Chilians. Soon afterwards we take our leave, our kind hostess uttering the usual hospitable formula to a new acquaintance : "Ya sabe Usted su casa" (you now know your house) ; or, more freely rendered, "make yourself at home here."

In the evening, after dinner, which takes place throughout Chili at an early hour—usually between five and six o'clock—we emerge once more from the hotel to spend the evening with some older acquaintances of the town, in accordance with a previous invitation. Their house reached, we enter the drawing-room, which resembles in character that already described, and find assembled half-a-dozen young ladies, the hostess, another duenna, and two or three Chilian gentlemen. The latter are, as a rule, silent and retiring in society, paying more attention to the wine in the background than to the ladies. None of the company are in evening dress, which is seldom seen, except on great occasions.

Music and dancing now take place, which, in this small way, form the most frequent style of evening entertainment. The dancing is not, as a rule, good ; at least, according to English notions. But the national dance of Chili, the "samacueca," familiarly called the "cueca," is graceful and interesting, and more than once is danced in the course of the evening. A lady and a gentleman step forward, holding a handkerchief in hand, as the piano sounds the opening bars of the accompanying music, which is of marked and peculiar rhythm in triple time. Some of the on-lookers then burst into song, to which the dancers move with appropriate gestures, the gentleman apparently making advances to the lady, who resists him coquettishly ; the feet of both moving in time to the music with not very complicated steps. The handkerchiefs are, throughout, gracefully and incessantly waved by each performer. Two verses, with a pause between them, complete the dance.

The musical portion of the evening's entertainment is chiefly instrumental, few Chilian ladies being able to sing. Their voices, when they have any, are thin and weak, whether from their mode of life, from the climate, or from their mixed descent—for few families of Chili are free from Indian blood—it is hard to say.

Modern Italian and French Opera form the *répertoire*. The great composers of Germany, and the early Italian composers, are often literally unknown, even by name.

At about half-past ten the company adjourn to another room, in which is a large table, bearing tea, bread-and-butter, and sweet cakes, at which all take their seats. This light supper is a regular and invariable institution in Chilian families, the ladies of which are generally much addicted to cheap confectionery, a fact that, with their sedentary habits, probably accounts for the tendency to "embonpoint," which is sooner or later developed by them.

Returning to the drawing-room, music and dancing are resumed for another hour or so, when the retirement of the guests brings the simple but pleasant evening's amusement to a close. We step out into the street, which is silent, except for the occasional shrill whistles of the policemen signalling their watchfulness to one another, and walk back to our hotel in the cool night air, sweet with the scent of flowers, under a star-lit sky.

RONDEAU REDOUBLE.

It is the Spring, she comes, soft, sweet, and shy,
Touching with magic wand on all she sees ;
Her cloudlets flit across the April sky,
Her leaflets peep upon the barren trees ;

Her whisper, wooing in the soft south breeze,
Wakens from budding blooms a low reply ;
Her subtle stir runs over lawns and leas,
It is the Spring, she comes, soft, sweet, and shy.

The snowdrop chimes the vernal melody,
That rang through Paradise fair Eve to please ;
The primrose wakes as she goes gliding by,
Touching with magic wand on all she sees ;

The violet, loyal to her queen's decrees,
Gleams through the mosses that around her lie ;
The blue waves laugh upon the sunny seas,
The cloudlets flit across the April sky.

Nature, as one that, shaking off disease,
Defies his fate ; shouts, " 'Tis not time to die,
Earth has fresh glories for glad life to seize."
It is the Spring, she comes, soft, sweet, and shy,
It is the Spring !

TREE SUPERSTITIONS.

THERE is nothing in the whole world of Nature around which have not grown superstitions more or less whimsical and absurd. Trees have been, and still are, worshipped and venerated, and trees are also avoided as uncanny things, the very name of which must only be spoken in an awe-stricken whisper. Some are famous only for their peculiarities, and are neither feared nor liked. A list, numbering no

less than fifty such trees, now lies before me, the first of which is the apple-tree. Apart from the veneration that has been associated with this, as a mistletoe-bearing tree, it has been, in times past, customary on the part of farmers and others to toast, and, in a sense, offer up sacrifices, to this common fruit-tree.

According to the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1791, the farmer of South Devonshire, attended by his workmen, with a large pitcher of cider, was formerly in the habit of going to the orchard and there encircling one of the best bearing trees, when the company would drink the following toast several times :

Here's to thee, old apple-tree,
Whence thou may'st bud,
And whence thou may'st blow,
And whence thou may'st bear apples enow !
Hats full ! caps full !
Bushel, bushel sacks full !
And my pockets full, too ! Hurrah !

This done, they would return to the house, the doors of which they were sure to find shut and bolted by the female, who, be the weather what it might, was inexorable to all entreaties to open them until some one of those on the other side had guessed what was cooking on the spit. This was generally some tasty little titbit, difficult to be hit on, and which was the reward of him who first named it. The doors were then thrown open, and the lucky guesser received the morsel as his recompense. Some farmers were so stumped in superstition as to believe that, if this custom had been neglected, the trees would bear no apples that year.

The ash has always been associated with superstition, more of a divinatory character than anything else. It is an article of Icelandic belief that the wood of the mountain-ash should never be used for fuel, because all who sit round a fire composed of it would of a certainty become enemies. A rough poem of the Middle Ages informs the curious that we should

Burn ash wood green,
'Tis fire for a queen ;
Burn ash wood sear
'Twill make a man swear.

The even-leaved ash played a very important part in ancient love charms, as by it lovelorn damsels were enabled to discover their future husbands. It was also good for bringing luck if invoked in these words :

Even ash, I do thee pluck,
Hoping thus to meet good luck ;
If no luck I get from thee,
I shall wish thee on a tree.

Amongst the ancients it was generally believed that lightning would not touch the bay-tree, and, in consequence, its leaves were used as a charm against the lightning's flash. An old poem informs us that "Thunder nor fierce lightning harmes the bay," and the writer of a complimentary poem to Ben Jonson says:

I see that wreaths which doth the wearer arme
Gainst the quick strokes of thunder, is no charme
To keep off death's pale dart; for, Jonson, then
Thou hadst been numbered still with living men;
Time's scythe had feared thy lawrell to invade;
Nor thee this subject of our sorrow made.

The withering of the bay-tree was considered an omen of the most dangerous character, and a sure presage of death. Shakespeare makes use of this belief in "Richard the Second," thus:

'Tis thought the King is dead; we'll not stay—
The bay-trees in our country are withered.

It is also regarded as an emblem of the resurrection, and Sir Thomas Browne tells us that when apparently dead it will often revive, and its dry leaves expand with their former freshness.

The bay-tree was known, prior to the Christian era, as the tree of Apollo, the legend stating that Daphne was transformed by Jupiter into a bay-tree, in order to save her from the pursuit of Apollo. Through this, its leaves were chosen to form the wreath with which poets and successful competitors in games were crowned. The Pythian priestesses used to chew the leaves because, after a season of abstinence, they produced some degree of excitement which went by the names of prophecy and inspiration.

Like the ash, it possesses divinatory powers; and formerly, at Christmas time, it was customary to crush the leaves in the hollow of the hand. If they gave off a crackling sound the lover was true; if not, he was false. Gay told those who lived in his time that—

When rosemary and bay, the poet's crown,
Are bawled in frequent cries through all the town,
Then judge the festival of Christmas near.

From this it would appear that the bay was used at Christmas time for decorative purposes, as the holly and mistletoe are now.

There is evidence that some virtue or significance was once associated with the box-tree, by the discovery of twigs of this tree in some of the old British barrows in Essex. What that virtue was cannot now be ascertained; but in all probability it had some connection with the words of Isaiah, that "the box-tree shall flourish in the

land of Israel, when the waste places shall resume their ancient fruitfulness, and become the garden of the Lord."

There is one tree in Asia, the only tree of the kind known to exist, which bears the name of Buddha's hair tree. The story runs, that the hair of Teong Kaba, the founder of Buddhism, was cut off when he was three years of age. It was thrown outside his parent's tent, and from it grew a remarkable tree, every leaf of which bears on its surface a character in the sacred language of Thibet. The Abbé Huc, the famous traveller, declared that the tree was quite free from even the suspicion of a fraud. He also states that, though many attempts had been made to propagate the tree by seeds and cuttings, all had failed. The Lamasery connected with the tree is a great place of resort for pilgrims.

Next in alphabetical order comes the cypress-tree, which by us is usually associated with mourning and death, owing probably to its dark and sombre hue. From very remote times, in the East, however, it has been associated with births, and marriages, and rejoicings generally. When, amongst the inhabitants of the Greek Archipelago, a daughter was born, a grove of cypress-trees was planted by her father as her future portion, her dowry increasing as her years multiplied. By this means we are enabled to trace the origin of the name by which these groves were designated, "daughters' dowers." The oldest known tree in Europe is a cypress, at Somma, in Lombard, Italy. It is believed to be nineteen hundred and twenty-nine years of age, is one hundred and six feet high, and twenty feet in circumference one foot from the ground. Napoleon, when laying down his plan for the great road over the Simplon, diverged from a straight line in order to avoid injuring this tree. Strabo mentions a cypress in Persia two thousand five hundred years old; and De Candolle relates that he saw one in Mexico which measured one hundred and twenty feet round at its base. This he considered to be older than the baobab-tree of Africa, which, it is estimated, has existed five thousand seven hundred years.

About the elder-tree there has grown up quite a luxury of superstitions, principally owing to the tradition that it was on an elder-tree that Judas went out and hanged himself. The twigs of this tree were formerly believed to be a specific against epilepsy. An old quack says:

"In the month of October, a little before full moon, pluck a twig of the elder and cut the cane that is between two of its knees or knots in nine places, bind these pieces in a piece of linen; hang this by a thread about the neck so that they touch the spoon of the heart, or the sword-formed cartilage. And that they may the more firmly stay in their place, bind them thereon with a linen or silken roller wrapped about the body till the thread break of itself. The thread being broken and the roller removed, the charm is not to be touched at all with bare hands, but should be taken hold of by some instrument and buried in a place that nobody may touch it."

A strict observance of this charm was once regarded as an infallible remedy for epilepsy. The leaves of the elder, gathered on the last day of April, were used for curing wounds and charming witches away.

"Boys," says an old writer, "must not be beaten with an elder stick; it hinders their growth."

Of the elm-tree it has been said by a versifier of the past:

When elmen leaf is as big as a mouse's ear,
Then to sow barley never fear;
When elmen leaf is as big as an ox's eye,
Then sing Hie! boys, Hie!

Of course verses such as these were written before the change in the calendar, and some allowance must be made also for the change of climate which has come over the country.

I now come to a tree about which pages of folk-lore might be written—I mean the sweet-scented hawthorn; but, as brevity is the soul of wit, I will condense this mass into as small a compass as possible.

Scott, in his "Witchcraft," tells of the sprig of hawthorn being gathered on May-day, and hung in the entry of a house as a presumed preservative against all evil influences, and bad spirits. The ancient Greeks made it emblematic of Hope, and carried it in their wedding processions, beside using it to deck the altar of Hymen. But since this time it has undergone a strange change in public opinion, for, in Derbyshire, if a child brought a sprig into the house, it was at once thrown out, because "the flowers smell like death," and "if the May withers in the house the death of some member of the family will shortly follow."

This superstition is by no means peculiar to the county of Derby, for the plant has, more or less, a bad name everywhere. In

some parts, the very act of sleeping in a room where the hawthorn is, is regarded as the precursor of dire misfortune. Perhaps we may find the reason for this in a passage in Sir John Mandeville's Travels:

"Then was our Lord yled into a gardeyn, and there the Jewes scorned hym and maden hym a crown of the braunches of the albiespyne, that is whitethorn, that grew in the same gardeyn, and settyen yt upon hys heued. And, therefore, hath the whitethorn many virtues. For he that beareth a braunch on hym thereof, no thundre, ne no maner of tempest may dere hym, ne in the house that yt is yune may non evil ghost enter."

To a belief that the white-thorn formed Christ's crown of thorns, is due a French superstition that this tree utters groans and cries on Good Friday.

Brand, in his "Antiquities," states that: "It was an old custom in Suffolk, in most of the farm-houses, that any servant who could bring in a branch of hawthorn in full blossom on the first of May, was entitled to a dish of cream for breakfast. This custom is now disused, not so much from the reluctance of the masters to give the reward, as from the inability of the servants to find the whitethorn in flower" on that day.

There was formerly—so we are told by tradition—a hawthorn-tree which grew on a hill in Glastonbury Abbey burying-ground, which budded and blossomed regularly on Christmas Day. The Abbey, which is now a heap of ruins, was said by the monks to have been the residence of Joseph of Arimathea, and, according to their story, he came to England with eleven followers, and raised the first Christian temple to the Virgin. On the first day of his arrival, Christmas Day, he fixed his staff in the ground as a kind of standard. The staff immediately took root, put forth leaves, and the next day—like Aaron's rod—was covered with blossoms, thereby showing the approbation of the Almighty concerning the work about to be commenced.

According to the "London Evening Post," a vast concourse of people attended the noted thorn on Christmas Eve, 1753; but to their great disappointment there was no appearance of it blooming. They, however, watched it narrowly until January the sixth—Christmas Day, old style—when it bloomed as usual.

Formerly there also grew in a gentleman's garden at Aberglasney, Carmarthen—

shire, a hawthorn which flowered on Christmas Day; but on the next day all the blossoms faded. The people who flocked to see this phenomenon were so numerous that the owner of the garden ordered the tree to be cut down, since which time no single blade of grass has grown on the spot, except at Christmas Eve; but this, like the hawthorn-blossom, dies the next morning.

A similar circumstance is recorded in the "Gentleman's Magazine" as having occurred at Quainton, Bucks.

In the South of England there is a well-established belief that

If you sweep the house with the blossomed broom in May.

You're sure to sweep the head of the house away.

As illustrative of this superstition, an anecdote is related as having occurred in a Sussex village. A poor girl was lingering in the last stage of consumption; but her countenance always lighted up at the sight of flowers. One day, though, she appeared so unhappy after a nosegay of bright spring flowers had been laid on her bed, that she was asked if the smell was disagreeable. "Oh, no," she replied, "they are very nice indeed; but I should be very glad if you would throw away that piece of yellow bloom, for they do say death comes with it if it is brought into the house in the month of May." I have never heard this superstition spoken of anywhere north of the Trent, though it may possibly exist.

From Mexico there comes a peculiar tree known as the "tree of little hands." It is thus called owing to the fact that its five peculiarly-curved anthers bear some slight resemblance to the fingers of a child.

Anything more preposterous than the uses to which the hazel is put cannot possibly be conceived. It is one of the most picturesque of our flowering shrubs; but it has but a poor repute owing to its too intimate connection with the black art. Its branches are termed "the rod of Jacob," "the twig," and "the divining rod;" and formerly it was no unusual sight to see persons wandering, apparently aimlessly, about fields and through villages with one of these branches or twigs in their hands, seeking, through its deflection, for water, buried hoards, or to discover criminals. The belief has died out somewhat, though it still exists. It is also believed that a twig of the hazel placed over the door of a dwelling-house is an infallible charm

against lightning; and various other supernatural powers are attributed to this mystic tree.

The juice of the hemlock, which is deadly in its effect, was extracted by the Greeks; and, in cases of capital offences, the criminal was given a dose if his crime had not been particularly heinous.

About the holly I might say much, but shall content myself on the present occasion with only a few words. Throughout Germany this tree bears the name of "Christ's Thorn;" presumably, because it berries at the time of our Saviour's birth. Legendary history informs us that it was in a holly-bush that the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire; and also that the cross on which the Saviour was crucified was made of holly, on which account it bears the name of "Lignum Sancte Crucis." The holly-tree has become an object of worship, like the mistletoe; and at one time new-born children were sprinkled with water impregnated with holly to ward off evil spirits.

Carols have been penned in praise of the holly, one of which, written in the time of Henry the Sixth, says:

Nay, Ivy! nay, it shal not be I wys;
Let Holy hafe the maystery, as the maner ys,
Holy stond in the halle, fayre to behold;
Ivy stond without the dore; she ys full fore a cold.

Holy and hys merry men they dawnsin and they syng—

Ivy and her maydenys they wepyn and they wrying.
Ivy hath a lybe; she laghtit with the cold,
So mot they alle haf that wyth Ivy hold.

Holy hath berys as red as any rose,
The foster the hunters kepe hym from the doo (pain).
Ivy hath berys as black as any slo;
There come the oule and ete hym as she goe.

Holy hath byrdys, a ful fayre flok,
The nyghtyngale, the poppyngy, the gayntyl lavy-rock.

Good Ivy! what byrdys art thou?
Non but the Howlet that "How! How!"

I may as well here deal with the ivy, which is said to be symbolic of eternal life, on account of its clinging nature and extreme age. The Egyptians dedicated it to Osiris, and the Greeks and Romans to Bacchus. The latter, the god of wine, is invariably represented as crowned with a chaplet of ivy, because the ancients believed that ivy would neutralise the intoxicating influence of any excess in wine-drinking. To newly-married persons the ancient priests presented branches of ivy, as emblematic of the Gordian knot by which they were bound together.

In classic times the laurel, one of our most beautiful evergreens, was famous for

its many virtues. Those who slept beneath its branches were believed to be endowed with poetical inspiration; while it was regarded also as impervious to the lightning-shaft. It is recorded that the Emperor Tiberius, whenever the sky portended a storm, placed a chaplet of laurel round his neck. An old writer (seventeenth century) ridiculing the belief which continued right down to his time, stated that a few years before he wrote, a laurel-tree had been struck by lightning at Rome. In the Pythian games, the victors were rewarded with wreaths of laurel, while those in the Olympian games were formed of green parsley. Petrarch planted a grove of laurels around the grave of Virgil, at Baia, near Naples, the successors of which are still standing.

One of the peculiarities of vegetable life in Jamaica is what may, appropriately enough, be termed the "life-tree," from the tenacity with which it clings to life. It is impossible to kill the tree, either by plucking off its fruit, or by chopping it down. The only exterminator is fire.

The Brahmans believe that to dream of a mango-tree is indicative of the coming of a friend; that if the mango-tree be in bloom, he will come with good news; if in fruit, with some rich presents.

A very common tree in the East is the "manna-tree," the bark of which is purposely wounded to permit the flow of the manna. In odour it resembles honey; in taste it is sweet, with a subsequent bitter flavour; when eaten, it acts as a mild purgative, but it is also more or less nutritious and fattening. It is sought after and eaten by the Arabs, and by the monks of Mount Sinai.

The luckiest plant, or tree, for a house-window, it may be interesting to know, is the myrtle, as its possessor will be sure to gain fortune and happiness. By an old saw we are told to water it every evening, and be proud of it. On Saint Catherine's day, love charms may be worked with the assistance of a sprig of myrtle.

One of the noblest of English trees is the oak, enormous and ancient examples of which are to be seen in the parks attached to our old manor houses and castles. It was, once upon a time, believed that the oak-tree was mysteriously protected, and that any injury done it would be severely punished. This, of course, is a relic of the Druidic age. And the old superstition, which refuses to give up the ghost, is that if the oak gets into

leaf before the ash, we may expect a fine and productive year; while if the ash leaf before the oak, a cold summer and an unproductive autumn may be anticipated. Statistics kept from 1816 down to 1880 show that some slight attention may be paid to the omen. There is, however, an exception to every rule, and there is one to this. It is said of the Cadenham oak, in the New Forest, that it was once in the habit of budding on Old Christmas Day in honour of the birth of the Saviour, and that when the style was changed—from old to new—it refused to follow suit by budding on the eighth of January.

An old weather rhyme, dealing with the subject of trees and seasons, informs us that—

When the oak comes out before the ash,
You'll have a summer of wet and splash;
When the ash comes out before the oak,
You'll have a summer of dust and smoke.

Then, further, we are told to—

Beware of the oak, it draws the stroke;
Avoid an ash, it courts a flash;
Creep under a thorn, it will save you from harm.

The foregoing, as a matter of course, refers to sheltering beneath trees during a thunderstorm.

The age attained by oaks is truly marvellous, as are also their girths. In Clifton Park there is an oak (the Parliamentary) said to be fifteen hundred years old, which was known to exist before the Conquest. Yorkshire boasts of one, the Calthorpe oak, which measures seventy-eight feet in circumference at the base. The Damary oak is sixty feet, and the Merton oak sixty-three feet. The tallest and straightest oak was one known as "The Duke's Walking-stick," which grew in Clipston Park, and was higher than Westminster Abbey. There was formerly in Nanneu Park, Dolgelly, a blasted oak, known as the "Cenbron yr Elyll," or the haunted oak, in which it is said Owain Glyndwr threw the body of his treacherous cousin, Howell Sele. Here the body remained for over a quarter of a century, until the tree was struck by lightning, and a grim skeleton showed itself. The tree was finally blasted in the early part of the present century. The romantic history of this oak is too long to tell; but visitors to the Switzerland of Wales have only to ask a few leading questions to become possessors of it. In Tredegar Hall, Monmouthshire, there is a room forty-two feet long, by twenty-seven wide, the floor and wainscot of which were obtained from one

oak-tree grown in the park. Amongst the minor great oaks may be mentioned the "Three Shires Oak," near Worksop, the "Baddington Oak," the "Hemstead Oak," and the "Saley Oak." One of the chief attractions to visitors in the village of Neebdenitz, Saxony, is an oak five hundred years old, in which may be seen seated the skeleton of a former lord of Wintersheim.

It may not be generally known that many of the Queens of England have been in the habit of choosing oaks in Windsor forest to which they have given their name. This, with the date of choice, has been engraved on a brass plate, and fastened to the tree. Hence, in the most beautiful part of the forest, may be seen with seats around them trees bearing the names of Queen Anne, Queen Caroline, Queen Charlotte, and Queen Victoria. Herne's Oak, mentioned in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," as being in Windsor Park, was destroyed by the wind on the thirty-first of August, 1863.

The palm has gained a high distinction from the fact that, when the Saviour made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, branches of this tree were thrown down for him to pass over. In Catholic churches, on Palm Sunday, branches are carried round the church with great solemnity; after which they are blessed by the priest. It is or was considered very lucky to carry a piece of palm in the purse.

One of the most sacred trees in the East is the peepul, which is venerated alike by the Buddhist and the Hindoo. It is their tree of knowledge and wisdom; and under its branches it is believed that Vishnu was born, and that Gautama slept when he had his wonderful dream that he was about to become a Buddha. When the dream was fulfilled, Gautama was, by a remarkable coincidence, seated beneath the same tree. The leaves are heart-shaped, and vibrate in the open air in a manner similar to the aspen. A branch of the tree, together with the collar-bone, begging-dish, and other relics of Gautama, were sent to Amuradhapeona, in the interior of Ceylon, in the year (B.C.) 250 by Asoka. The tree which sprang from the branch is said to be still in existence, and is one of the most sacred places of pilgrimage of the Buddhists. Fergusson believed there was no older idol in the world. In its branches the natives say that all the good and evil spirits of the world lodge.

Arabia has a curious tree, the seeds of which, it is said, if pulverised and taken

in small doses, will excite even the most sedate persons to perform all the contortions, facial and bodily, of a circus clown for about the space of one hour. When the excitement tones down the person falls into a sound sleep, and, strangely enough, wakes up again without any recollection of the ridiculous figure he has been cutting.

The pine-tree is one of the most useful and luxuriant of our forest trees, and in ancient days it received an amount of veneration amongst the Greeks and Romans, similar to the oak-tree amongst the Druids. Seeds of the pine-tree were placed on the altars, and were regarded as certain specifics in some diseases. Indeed, when the Emperor Julian, 362 A.D., was spitting blood, and apparently nearing death's door, the oracle instructed him to take from the sacred altar some seeds of the pine, and mix them with honey. These he was to eat for three days. He did this, and, so the historian says, was cured.

The wood of the rowan-tree was formerly regarded as the most powerful spell that could be applied against the evil influences of witches and warlocks. Even the Evil Being himself could not withstand the charm. The witch, in the "Laidlaw Worm," is thus spoken of:

The spells were vain, the hag returned
To the Queen in sorrowful mood—
Crying that witches had no power
Where there is rowan-tree wood.

In Hunter's "Annals of Rural Bengal," there is the following interesting instance of tree worship:

"Adjoining the Santal village is a grove of their national tree"—the sal (*shorea robusta*)—"which they believe to be the favourite resort of all the family gods (*lares*) of the little community. From its silent gloom the bygone generations watch their children playing their several parts in life. Several times a year the whole hamlet, dressed out in its showiest, repairs to the grove to do honour to the *lares rurales*, with music and sacrifice. Men and women join hands, and, dancing in a large circle, chant songs in remembrance of the original founder of the community, who is venerated as the head of the village pantheon. Goats, red cocks, and chickens are sacrificed; and while some of the worshippers are told off to cook the flesh for the coming festival at great fires, the rest separate into families and dance round the particular tree which they fancy their domestic *lares* chiefly haunt."

Another peculiar Indian tree is the "sorrowful tree," which also finds a home in South America. In both countries it grows in great abundance. The flowers, which possess a most fragrant but evanescent perfume, live only one night. In the evening they open, and by morning they are faded. Its blossoms, says a traveller, pour the most delicate fragrance on the evening air, and then fall in showers, bedewing the earth's bosom with sweetness. On account of the short life of its flowers, the tree is regarded as the emblem of mourning and of sorrow. From the tubes of the fallen flowers a bright yellow dye is obtained, which is used to give the rich colour to the turbans of the Mohammedans of India. The tree itself is but small of stature, and its leaves are rough.

In some parts of England there grows a peculiar thorn known as "Christ's thorn," thus named on account of the thorns bearing some slight resemblance to a cross. Miller says:

"It hath long, sharp spikes; the flower has five leaves, in form of a rose; out of the flower cup, which is divided into several segments, rises the pointal, which becomes the fruit, shaped like a bonnet, having a shell almost globular, which is divided into three cells, in each of which is contained a roundish seed. This is by many persons supposed to be the plant from which our Saviour's crown of thorns was composed."

A peculiar, and at the same time useful tree, is one peculiar to Canada and Virginia, and which one could wish was common to England. It is generally known as the "toothache-tree," a name derived from the use to which its bark and capsules are applied—the relief of the tormenting pain, the toothache. In the United States it is also used for the cure of chronic rheumatism, doses of from ten grains to half a drachm of the prepared bark being used for the purpose. The tree is a very low and deciduous one, its leaves very much resembling those of the ash.

The angelica-tree is also supposed to possess similar virtues.

Supernatural, almost diabolical, influences are attributed to the famous upas-tree, which, according to all accounts, is so deadly, that, if a hot wind passes over it, an odour is carried along which is fatal to whoever breathes it. Old letters, written from Paris in 1642 by "The Turkish Spy," describe a plant cultivated in a garden in

the city that blasts all that grows within ten cubits of its roots. They call it "ill neighbour." He declares that there was a withered circle around it, while the tree itself was green and thrifty. There is a tradition of a poison, or upas, tree that grows in the Island of Java, from which a putrid steam rises and kills whoever it touches. Foersch, a Dutch physician (1783), says: "Not a tree nor blade of grass is to be found in the valley or surrounding mountains. Not a beast, or bird, or reptile, or living thing lives in the vicinity. On one occasion sixteen hundred refugees encamped within fourteen miles of it, and all but three hundred died within two months." The falsehood of this story is exposed by Bennett, who says: "The tree (upas), while growing, is quite innocuous, though the juice may be used for poison; the whole neighbourhood is most richly covered with vegetation; men may fearlessly walk under the tree, and birds roost in its branches." Darwin, in his "Loves of the Plants," has perpetuated Foersch's fable when he says:

On the blasted heath
Fell Upas sits, the hydra tree of death.

It is probable that the fable of the blighting influence of the upas-tree has been derived from the fact that there is in Java a small tract of land on which nothing can live. This is caused, not by the "fell upas," but by emanations of carbonic acid gas, which are constantly going on. At the same time, it is quite true that the juice of the upas is a deadly poison.

The churchyard of Glastonbury was once famous for a walnut-tree, which grew there and budded with unremitting punctuality on the eleventh of June, old style. There is nothing to tell why this peculiarity should exist, and the tree being gone, nothing remains but the bare legend.

The "water-tree" is a species of vegetation peculiar to Madagascar. At the extremity of each branch there grows a broad, double leaf, several feet in length, which spreads itself out in a very graceful manner. By rapidly radiating the heat after sunset, the leaves collect on themselves a quantity of dew, which runs in tiny streams down the branches of the trunk, where it is collected in hollow squares at the root. By inserting a knife or piece of stick between the overlapping branches, a stream of water, somewhat similar to a fountain, immediately gushes forth.

It is said by some that the introduction

of the weeping-willow, an emblem of death, into England was as follows. Alexander Pope, the poet, while he lived in his pretty villa on the Thames, received a present of a basket of figs from Turkey. He was informed that the basket was made of the twigs of the same species of willow as those under which the Jews sat, while in captivity in Babylon. Pope, with a faint hope that these twigs would grow, planted them in his garden, and, to his great delight, they took root. Year by year he was besieged by visitors, who begged slips of these peculiar trees, and from them came all the weeping-willows in our land. Some doubt is cast on this story; but if it is not true, it is, at least, pretty. One thing is certain, the prefix "weeping" came from the fact that the Jews of Bible times sat under them and wept. The Bohemians had a superstition that it was on one of these trees Judas hanged himself; from which circumstance they esteemed it unlucky.

For some reason, yew-trees generally find their home in the churchyard, probably owing to their sombre appearance. Before the invention of guns, our ancestors made their bows of the yew-tree. It has been, from the earliest times, regarded as an emblem of mourning, first by the Egyptians, from whom the Greeks copied it. The Romans took the idea from the Greeks; and they, in their turn, introduced it into England, with their occupation of the island. In funeral processions, branches of the yew were carried over the dead by the mourners, and thrown under the coffin in the grave. It is also a solitary tree, the custom of planting them singly being equally ancient with its association with death.

The value set upon the yew and other trees is shown in an extract from the ancient laws of Wales: "A consecrated yew, its value is a pound; a mistletoe branch, three score pence; an oak, six score pence; principal branches of an oak, thirty pence; a yew-tree (not consecrated), fifteen pence; a sweet apple, three score pence; a sour apple, thirty pence; a thorn tree, seven pence half-penny; every other tree, four pence."

About five miles from the Hertfordshire residence of the Marquess of Salisbury, at a place called Tewin, or Jewin, there grows from out of a grave five large trees, about which there hangs a tale. It is said that Lady Grimstone, during her lifetime, denied the existence of a God; but added,

that if she found a God when she went hence, five trees would grow from out of her grave. In the natural order of events, her unbelieving ladyship died, and was buried. Singularly enough, five trees did grow from out of the grave, splitting the masonry to pieces, so that it and the railings which were around became a perfect wreck. How much truth there may be in the story, I cannot say; but the alab bore, or did bear, the following inscription: "Here lyeth inter'd the body of the Right Honorable Lady Anne Grimstone, wife of Sir Samuel Grimstone, Bart., of Gorhambury, in Hertfordshire, daughter of the late Right Honorable the Earl of Thanet, who departed this life Nov. 22, 1713, in the 60 year of her age." The circumstance has frequently been quoted as affording indubitable proof of the immortality of the soul.

I shall now, having exhausted my stock, draw this article to a close, after quoting Spenser's lines on various trees:

Much can they praise the trees so straight and high,
The sailing pine, the cedar proud and tall,
The vine prop elm, the poplar never dry,
The builder oak, sole king of forest all;
The aspen, good for staves; the cypress funeral.
The laurel, meed of mighty conquerors
And poets sage; the fir that weepeth still,
The willow, worn of forlorn paramours,
The yew, obedient to the bender's will,
The birch for shafts, the sallow for the mill,
The myrrh, sweet bleeding of the bitter wound,
The warlike beech, the ash for nothing ill,
The fruitful olive and the plantain round,
The carver holm, the maple seldom inward sound.

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

BY MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER III. THE BITTER PAST.

GEORGE stands in the doorway, waiting the approach of those measured footsteps. He has a scared look, has George; for a warder, passing by, has whispered a strange sentence or two in his ear, and he is almost as intent upon watching the Chaplain as he is in watching poor old David, in the fervent hope that that veteran will rise to the occasion, and make a good end.

A low, feeble, yet prolonged wailing is the first sound that greets Louis Draycott's ears as he reaches the door of the lodge; and for this pitiful sound, George feels called upon to apologise.

"It's t' little wench, sir," he says, in a curdling whisper that is supposed to be peculiarly fitting for the solemnity of the

occasion, "hoo's takin' on dreadful, hoo is; and it worrits father most perticler. I'm afeerd, sir, as the worrit on't will hold him back from going off comfor'ble, and bein' all as we could wish."

The clamorous desolation of the child touches the heart of the man whose desolation is silent.

"Poor little one!" he says, pityingly; and then passes through the outer room to that inner chamber which is already invested with the wonderful dignity and grandeur that ever attend upon the presence of the King of Terror, no matter how plain and unpretending the appointments of the room wherein his dread presence is found.

"Peace be to this house and to all that dwell in it."

The voice that utters the beautiful words of holy greeting is low, clear, and steady. There are times when the Christian priest has to rise superior to all the circumstances of his own life or sorrow. He is Heaven's—not his own—in the day when he is called upon to minister to the sick and dying. He must carry the light that has been given to him; he must guide the feet that stumble upon the confines of the dark valley. No tears must blind him; no weakness make his step falter.

As a mother's hand, laid upon a troubled child, soothes it to quietness and peace, so has the call of duty braced and steadied the nerves of the man whose bitter vigil has been kept through the long hours of the sleepless night.

Presently the anguish will rise in its might once more; but for the moment it is in abeyance, overpowered by a need still mightier than itself.

The old man lies back upon his pillow, a noble venerable figure in death, as he had been in life. Upon the brow, from which the lint-white locks fall back straying over the pillow, stands the cold sweat of exhaustion. The lips show livid through the long, grey beard. The muscles round the mouth begin to relax, and the jaw falls when weakness drops into heavy sleep. As it is dropping now while Louis Draycott stands a moment by the bed, and then kneels, covering his face with his hands.

Tottie—stretched upon the coverlet, a dreadful little heap of misery—stops her sobs, awed into silence. Joseph Stubbs, whose bright eyes shine like palest emeralds from out the corner by the wall, lifts his tawny head and gives a feeble cry. He knows that something is wrong with the master he loves, and fancies help may

have arrived in the person of the newcomer.

The yellow glow in the east, that was but as the span of a man's hand, has widened and deepened, and covered all the sky. Its amber sheen falls through the small, high window of the room, upon the face of the dying man, as though Heaven itself were whispering a benediction.

The sunken eyes beneath the shaggy brows unclose, and look into the kindly face bending above them.

"I'm glad yo' be come, sir," says David; and, as he speaks, finds his venetted, trembling hand in the strong clasp of the other. "I bided, and bided, and bided—for I didna' like to have yun sleep broke—until I couldna' bide no longer. I'd like for yo' to say a bit of a prayer for me and for her, sir—for t' little weech—for hoo's gradely troubled is Tottie."

At this the child, creeping nearer to him, breaks once more into weeping; and Joseph Stubbs stretches one furry paw out from his hair on to Tottie's shaking shoulder, as who should say: "I'm only a cat, I know; but I do feel for you. Please don't forget I'm one of the family."

We stand on holy ground. The simple room has become a sanctuary. The light that shines through the barred window might well be the gleam of a hundred altar-lights.

Tears course down the cheeks of George as he stands with bowed head, and hands clasped upon his breast. He has forgotten all about wishing his father would "make a good end." He has forgotten all save that the old man lying there gave him life, and is now fast drifting away out unto "that unknown sea that rolls round all the world."

Not a sound breaks the stillness of the room save the voice that pleads with Heaven for God's peace and comfort upon the soul of the dying man; a prayer so simple and so plain that even Tottie understands every word of it, and says Amen with the rest.

David is so still, so like some fine recumbent figure carved in stone, that the Chaplain is uncertain if words can pierce into that shadowland where the old man's spirit seems to dwell; but, at the sound of the sweet, familiar "Our Father," the eyelids quiver, the lips move, the prayer of prayers is followed word by word. It is like the appeal of some old meek dy, known and loved from childhood. It strikes a

chord in heart and memory that vibrates to the touch. Ofttimes have I seen and noted this by many and many a death-bed; seen the quiver in the dying face; seen the white lips move; known that that cry to the Father is never uttered in vain, however thick the mist may be gathering about the soul which nears the confines of the dark valley.

Louis Draycott is about to rise from his knees. Tottie has let a pent-up sob or two escape; George is turning to leave the room, in answer to a summons at the gate. For a moment he does not notice a strange change that comes over his father. But Tottie sees it, and clings to the pillow in a sort of frenzy of love and fear; the while the Chaplain cannot rise from his knees, because David's long, thin, sinewy hand is laid upon his shoulder—laid so heavily that it trembles with the pressure. The sunken eyes are widely open, and shine with a wondrous light; a faint flush has mounted to the worn cheek; the pallid mouth quivers.

"What ails thee? Has some sore trouble come upon thee? What's come over thee, that's bin so good—so good to me? Tell me, for God A'mighty's sake!"

The voice is hoarse and strange, but each word seems to ring through the quiet room—each word seems as a fresh stab of pain to the man to whom it is addressed.

Who can cheat the dying? Of what avail is it to reel off the glib lie—to put forward the mean, pitiful subterfuge to those whose nearness to the land where all things are made plain has already given them the keen and perfect intuition which sees, and knows, and pierces even to the very marrow of the bones?

The nearer heaven, the clearer the light. When one beloved is longed for, and the hands are running low, some one may say: "He will not come; he is hindered. You must bear it as you may. You must die with this bitter heart-hunger unsatisfied." The eyes that so soon shall close upon all earthly things, to open in a world where misunderstanding and treachery can naught avail, will look up into the faces round the bed, full of a strange, unearthly light; the lips that shall so soon be shrouded for ever from your sight will whisper faintly, yet clearly, too: "It is no use to tell me these things. They are lies, lies, lies, I know. He would have come to me if he could. He has been kept away."

So with David. In this supreme hour, knowledge is given to him. He reads, like an open book, the face of the man who still kneels beside him.

"What's come over thee? What's troubling thee?" he says, his voice breaking and quivering, his hand clutching more and more agitatedly at the shoulder it rests on.

Tottie gazes earnestly at the dark face that stirs and quivers just ever so little as the old man speaks. The question so earnestly put by those dying lips is like the probing of a wound.

"A great trouble has come upon me, David; pray for me, old friend, as I for you."

And then the poor, trembling hands are clasped, and the eyes, from which the strange light has died out, are raised to Heaven, while, in that moment of weakness and helplessness, the voice which would fain utter words of supplication falls to a feeble, gasping sound, and ends in the awful rattling breath that is the immediate precursor of death. The grand old head droops; the hands fall apart.

George hurries to the bedside. Tottie cries aloud, burying her face in the pillow.

Surely, upon the wings of that wordless prayer, the spirit that breathed it has passed to the land that lies beyond our ken!

But no; one utterance still is given, for, as the Chaplain bends closely down, he catches some faltering words:

"I'm glad—as He knows—about t' little wench——"

Then all is still.

"Into Thy hands, O loving Saviour, we commend the soul of Thy servant."

Who, to hear the calm, clear voice that utters these words, could realise that the heart of the man who thus speaks is well-nigh breaking? Yet what a passionately-pathetic undercurrent of thought is running through his mind! With what a sad radiancy does the memory of one hour passed in that simple room, that is now the temple of death, rise before him! He looks at the form—tall, gaunt, majestic in its perfect rest, and recalls the kindly smile, the hand holding Mazie's, the blessing given and returned; Aunt Dacie in the tall, carved chair by the fireplace; her gentle wonder at Mazie's earnest words and ways; the talk about the pictures on the wall, that now seem to have a pathos of their own; the tawny cat rubbing its soft head against Mazie's arm. . . .

How far, how far away in the past do these things lie! Was it but so short a while ago, or is it "a thousand years" since his darling turned to look upon the dark prison walls and told him how dear she held his work, for his sake, and for the sake of the sorrow and the sin gathered in that gloomy pile! How high had been his hopes; how dazed he had been with the joy of it all! How had he walked through enchanted streets—lived in a fairy world!

And now, in some strange way, the still, recumbent figure on the bed seemed to symbolise his own dead hopes.

Another moment, and he has cast aside these thoughts, and is bending over and raising Tottie from the bed, where she lies prone, a little heap of sobs, and has set her on his knee.

All her tangle of curls falls against his shoulder. She throws her little arms about his neck, and, with an exceeding bitter cry, bemoans her dead.

"Oh, gran'dad—gran'dad! What will I do without you, dear!"

It is useless for any of us to try and comfort such sorrow in its first moments of bitterness. The loving kiss, the tender presence may be borne; but words are worse than wasted.

Louis Draycott, holding the child gently in his arms, carries her into the adjoining room; while George breaks in with many an asseveration of how he had always said "The little wench would take on dreadful after father;" and Joseph Stubbs, coming stealthily forth from his hiding-place, rubs his arched back up against Tottie's legs, and makes a low, purring noise, striving—according to his lights—to comfort her.

"Give her to me, sir," says a kindly voice, presently; and Bessy, looking rather tossed and tumbled, and very pale in the face, holds out her arms for the little one. Bobby—in the disgracefully inadequate attire of one long, white nightgown—follows on, gravely contemplating the scene, and, according to his wont, saying his say with the rest.

"Her be's c'yin' and c'yin'," he says, pointing to Tottie, who is clinging about his mother. "Bobby is sorry—and so is 'Tubba."

Thus surrounded by comforters, Louis Draycott leaves the child, and walks, slowly and wearily enough, now the strain is over, up the steps and along the corridor to his rooms.

The sunshine glares in through the skylights overhead. A canary, kept by one of the warders, and much thought of by every one, seems ready to split its little yellow throat by trying how loud it can sing.

How cruelly the sunshine, and the flowers, and the singing of birds mock us when the heart within us is like lead, and our feet drag for very heaviness!

Well has the sweet singer of the North said:

How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I see weary, full of care!

The shrill jubilant song of the prison canary seems to hurt in the hearing. As Louis Draycott passes on to his rooms, it seems an echo from a world in which he has no longer any part—a world of joy that lies somewhere very far away, and that his feet may never enter more.

As he crosses the threshold of the room, a figure, seen in dark relief against the sun-flooded window, turns, meets him, greets him, with a close, tense grasp of outstretched hands, and in a silence that comes from lack of power to speak.

"Dumphy—you here, at this hour!"

As the grasp of those kind hands uncloses, Louis Draycott drops into the low lounge chair by the empty grate; his breath comes short and sharp; the sweat-beads start upon his brow.

Dumphy, pale, speechless with sorrow, takes the guise of yet another spectre from the dear dead past. It is almost too much to meet him thus so unexpectedly—too sudden a strain upon the wrung sinews of the mind.

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BROWNIE'S PLOT.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "Lucy Carter."

CHAPTER III. FROM PLAY TO EARNEST.

"THERE is no cause for alarm, so long as you keep Mr. Northcott free from worry," Mr. Anderson was saying, as he followed Mrs. Northcott into the drawing-room.

"But, if people call, he will insist upon seeing them," she expostulated.

"Well, you must do what you can. If it worries him less to see visitors than not to see them, by all means let it be so. I must leave that to your judgement, Mrs. Northcott."

Dr. Stanhope never left anything to the judgement of anybody, and Mrs. Northcott began to regret his absence more sincerely than ever.

"I say, Anderson," said Clement, "I wish you had your flannels on."

"It is impossible to deny that you look deliciously cool in yours," was the answer; "but I am afraid such a get-up would hardly be regarded as professional."

"The fact is, Mr. Anderson," said Maud, "Clement wants to impress you for tennis. He and my cousin consider themselves invincible, and if you could help to teach them humility, it would be a good action."

"And, certainly, one that would carry its own reward, Miss Northcott. If you repeat the invitation another time, I will accept it very gladly. But I am due at the Union directly after luncheon."

"Come back, this evening," suggested Clement.

"I have a meeting about the new Eye Hospital. I dare not miss that," he

answered, and Clement accompanied him to the gate.

"Anderson will come on Monday," said Clement, upon his return.

"Auntie won't like it," answered Brownie. "You know Dr. Stanhope never plays tennis. Fancy, fat old Dr. Stanhope! I am awfully glad Mr. Anderson is coming. I suppose you won't begin until after luncheon, now, Clement."

"No," he said; "and then I must run down as far as the bank, first."

"To the bank?" exclaimed Maud.

It was hardly likely he could have any money to pay in; whereas, she was sufficiently in her brother's confidence to know that there was none he could draw out. If Mr. Northcott had been about his business as usual, she might have assumed that Clement had received a cheque from his father; this being out of the question, however, Maud was puzzled.

Luncheon over, and also the all-important journey to and from the bank, Clement was at last ready for tennis; but Maud declared it was too hot for exertion of any kind.

"You'll come, Brownie," he said. "I'll race you to the hammock. One, two, three, away!"

The hammock swung between two big apple-trees at the end of the lawn-tennis court, and, before Brownie could reach it, Clement had already thrown himself lazily on his back.

"Whew! Maud wasn't far wrong, Brownie; it is hot. By Jove, it is just past three o'clock; I wonder who has won!"

"Who has won what, Clement?"

"The Oaks, of course. Ah, I see! You thought my mind was on the apples," and he stared up at the pink blossom.

"I dare say you wish you were there,"

she said, entangling her fingers in the meshes of the net.

"To be candid, Brownie—yes, I do. But I had not cheek enough to stay in London any longer."

"In London! As if everybody did not know you had been to Epsom."

"Now look here, my dear girl," he said, throwing one leg over the side of the hammock and raising his head proportionately, "just tell me how a fellow can travel from Middleton to Epsom, by rail, without taking London on the way. Besides, Brownie, you're not such a prig as to think it's a mortal sin to go to the Derby!"

"No; but I wish you had not gone this year. Not under the circumstances."

"Well, of course, if I had guessed the pater was going to be ill, I should not have gone. But I am not a prophet, you know, Brownie."

"I did not mean because of uncle's illness," was her quiet answer. "I am afraid there is going to be another of those dreadful scenes, Clement. Auntie has found a lot of bills."

"The deuce she has!" he cried, flinging his other leg outside the hammock, and looking anxiously into her face.

"Wine merchants' bills, tailors' bills, and—and—jewellers', Clement."

He sat watching his tennis shoes, then presently began to whistle.

"I don't believe you care one bit," she said, for it is provoking to hear a person whistle when you think he ought rather to weep.

"That's where you are wrong. I care a great many bits."

"Then you take great pains to hide your feelings," she retorted. "Sometimes I wonder whether you have any to hide."

"Don't say that, Brownie," he answered, more gravely. "Don't let us fall out. We have never quarrelled yet, have we? How long is it since you first came to us? By Jove, it must be something like twelve years! Suppose we kiss and be friends on the strength of it?"

She turned away and began to pluck the blossom from the apple-tree at random.

"Aren't you going to offer me an olive-branch?—an apple-branch, at any rate?"—he continued; and, half in jest half in earnest, she tossed a piece into the hammock.

"Clement," she said, presently, "if uncle hears of those bills it would be enough to kill him. Can't you do anything? Won't the people wait?"

"Look here, Brownie," he answered, after a few moments' hesitation, "I am going to let you into a secret. Only, mind you, it is a secret. Not a soul is to know of it; not even Maud."

Thrusting his hand deep into the pocket of his flannel jacket he brought forth an elaborately-embroidered silk case, from which he took a neat roll of Bank of England notes.

"Is that enough to pay them all?" was her first enquiry.

"No, worse luck. But I intended to give fifty to one fellow, and twenty to another, and so to keep them all civil. No wonder I had such a hunt for those bills yesterday."

"But, Clement," she said, with a little embarrassment, "you speak of giving fifty pounds and twenty pounds as if you had come into a small fortune. Where did you get all that money from?"

He was slowly putting the notes back into his pocket-case, and, whether from accident or design, he did not meet her eyes.

"You don't think I stole them," he said, with a laugh that sounded rather forced. "I got them from the bank, of course."

"Yes, but you went to London on your way to Epsom, you know, Clement. I suppose all notes come from the bank!"

"Ask no questions, hear no stories," he exclaimed, as he sprang to the ground; "then, if any one cross-examines you, you need not tell any, either. I know I am an awful fool, Brownie. Last time the governor squared things, he made me feel worse than a fool."

"But for all that——"

"I know what you would say. I have done exactly the same thing again. Why did I do it? I don't know; upon my life, I don't know. I meant to keep straight, and I didn't—that's all. I am becoming afraid of myself, Brownie. I have broken so many vows, that I am ashamed to make another—even to myself. If mother had not found those bills, I believe I might have kept the fellows quiet."

"But you have the money just the same, and, surely, if the people are paid, it will be all right. Could you not borrow the rest of the money, and pay it back by-and-by?"

"I have done all that, long ago," he replied, dismally—"all except the paying back. You see, if I pay the bills, she will be bound to know all about it. And if that is the case—at any rate, if it once

reaches the pater's ears, there will be a worse row than we have ever had yet—a hundred times worse."

He left her with these words ringing in her ears, and when Maud presently joined her, Brownie, for a wonder, declined to play.

But they all made amends on Monday afternoon for the laziness of Friday. Maud realised to her horror that she had rendered it impossible for Anderson to be the partner of any but herself. With his black coat, he seemed to have put off all his formality, together with at least ten years of his life, and Clement stood a good chance of receiving the beating which Maud had declared he needed.

So successfully had Clement thrown aside his troubles, that even Brownie, accustomed as she was to his lightness, was filled with astonishment. She had not been nearly so successful. Clement had told her either too much or too little. She would rather have heard nothing at all about those bank-notes, or have heard all about them. He could not have obtained them from his father; he had admitted they were not borrowed; whence, then, had they come?

But the demands of the game soon began to absorb all her attention.

"We only saved that set by the skin of our teeth," said Clement. "They will thrash us next time, Brownie; Anderson is a better man than I am."

This was a great admission for Clement, but his prophecy was a true one.

"One set all," exclaimed Maud, and having changed courts, she sat down for a moment's rest. Clement was swinging from one of the apple-branches, whilst Brownie stood pensively watching him.

"What a beautiful girl your cousin is," said Anderson; "at least, I am afraid I ought scarcely to venture upon such a personal remark."

"It is one I often hear," answered Maud, with frank heartiness, "and I can assure you she is as good as she looks. Have you ever noticed her eyes, Mr. Anderson? I always feel as though she could so easily mesmerise me. But there, I suppose you don't believe in mesmerism."

"Certainly not in all the trash that is talked about it," he explained. "But that mesmerism, or hypnotism, as it is better to call it, is a fact, there cannot be a shadow of doubt. As to the power of any particular pair of eyes, depend upon it, Miss

Northcott, that extends only over our hearts."

The sun shone as brightly as ever; a gentle breeze refreshed the players; and wherever the eye could rest there were beds of many-coloured flowers, over which the bees lingered with a notion of business which must have been very closely allied to pleasure.

"Four to two. Two more games like the last and we shall settle them!" cried Clement, as he sent a ball whizzing just over the top of the net to shoot along the level turf safely beneath Anderson's racquet.

But this game, begun so auspiciously, was destined never to be finished. In one moment Clement was summoned from what had been the playtime of his life to begin its battle in bitter earnest.

He was in the act of discharging another volley at Anderson, when a neatly-clad servant stepped though the open breakfast-room window.

Clement dropped his racquet; and, jumping the net, soon stood beside his sister.

"Father wishes to speak to you at once, Clement."

"I hope he is not worse," said Brownie, joining the group at the moment.

"If he had been, I am sure mother would have asked Mr. Anderson to go to him. How pale you are, Clement. Doesn't he look white, Brownie?"

"I'm all right," he said, hastily. "I was afraid something was up, that's all;" and, slipping his arms into his jacket as he went, he hastened towards the house.

Mr. Northcott lay on a couch by the window. At its head stood Mrs. Northcott, with something to trouble her in earnest for once in her life; and opposite to Mr. Northcott, his face towards the window, looking as though he would gladly have jumped out of it, was a tall, broad-shouldered man, whose clean-shaven face looked the more florid in contrast with his spotless white driving-coat. This was Sir Edward Spearing, of the Middleton Old Bank.

He respected Clement in the hunting-field as highly as Mr. Northcott in the counting-house; but, like everybody else in the town—especially everybody who was acquainted with Henry Grayson—he had heard so many reports of Clement's extravagancies, that his good opinion was modified when the hounds were not out.

When Clement's eyes fell upon Spearing,

he came to a standstill on the threshold ; and even after he had recovered from his apparent surprise and had advanced to greet the banker, it seemed that he had lost his usual frankness.

"Clement," said Mr. Northcott—a grey-headed, grey-bearded man, pale from recent illness—"this is a most unpleasant piece of business, although Sir Edward is doing his best to lighten it for me. Will you show him the cheque, Sir Edward ? I am told that you presented this draft at the bank on Friday afternoon," said Mr. Northcott. Is that true ?" he demanded, with an evident effort at self-control.

They all waited anxiously for Clement's answer ; but he stared blankly at the cheque for a moment, and then, seeing the three pair of eyes fixed upon his face, again looked at the pink slip of paper before speaking.

"Yes, father ; I took the cheque to the bank."

"From whom did you receive it ?" demanded Sir Edward Spearing, in obedience to Mr. Northcott's glance of entreaty.

Whatever had been Clement's faults, he had ever been outspoken, frank, and fearless ; always ready to suffer himself rather than bring trouble upon another. His present hesitation told against him with great force.

"I got it from Uncle Wal," he said, presently. "He asked me to get it cashed for him last Friday, and I ran down to the bank for the money directly after luncheon. Why, is there anything wrong ?" he asked, in something like his usual, careless tones.

"I have signed no such cheque," exclaimed Mr. Northcott. "It is a forgery," and he lay back on the sofa, with his eyes half closed.

"Then why did the fellow cash it ?" demanded Clement, turning sharply upon Sir Edward Spearing.

"The forgery is very skilfully executed," was the answer. "In the first place, the clerk was deceived. It was only when the matter came under my notice that our suspicions were aroused. You know, Mr. Northcott, you seldom draw for so large a sum on your private account. I think you ought to send for Mr. Litton."

"Then I suppose you have done with me," said Clement with great promptness, and he was actually on the point of quitting the room when, for the first time, Mrs. Northcott brought her guns into action.

"No one shall condemn my brother and

then refuse to meet him face to face," she declared.

Clement stepped backwards ; Mr. Northcott opened his eyes, and looked appealingly at Sir Edward Spearing.

"I quite agree with Mrs. Northcott," he said.

"Remain where you are, Clement," faltered his father, and Mrs. Northcott went in search of her brother.

CHAPTER IV. THE EVIDENCE

IF Clement had been wanting in his usual self-possession, Mr. Litton was the personification of cool assurance. His shiny face beamed with ingenuousness ; he looked as innocent as a child or a Chinaman.

"Litton," began Mr. Northcott, as Spearing handed him the draft, "this signature is a forgery. Clement tells me that he received the cheque from you on Friday ; that, at your request, he cashed it the same afternoon, and handed you the money."

Mr. Northcott seemed to find difficulty in framing his sentence, but it appeared to require a far greater effort on Mr. Litton's part before he could grasp its meaning.

"What does he say ? That he received it from me ? That I asked him to cash a cheque ? Why, I had no cheque. How could I have asked him to cash it ?"

Clement instinctively doubled his fist.

It was one man's word against another's. But Clement had admitted presenting the cheque, and receiving the money ; and so far the evidence appeared to be against him.

"His story won't bear a moment's consideration," continued Mr. Litton, coolly.

"He tells you he cashed the cheque, and gave me the money on Friday afternoon. Everybody in the house knows—you know, Mary—that it was on Friday I was taken queer. I went to bed before luncheon, and did not leave my room the whole day."

"You miserable shuffler !" exclaimed Clement.

"Pardon me," said Sir Edward Spearing, "but before Mr. Litton entered the room, you certainly did lead us to believe that you cashed the cheque on Friday afternoon. Mr. Litton asserts that you did not see him after luncheon. How, then, could you have given him the money ? It is for you to explain ; and, allow me to tell you, that it is no explanation to call a man a shuffler."

"He knows that I gave him the money

before he went to his room!" thundered Clement. "I gave it to him in the study before eleven o'clock—before I went to the bank;" and he glared at Mr. Litton, who met his glance with perfect steadiness.

"Great Heaven!" cried Mr. Northcott. "Do you ask us to believe that you had two hundred pounds in your possession on Friday morning?"

"Yes, sir, I do ask you to believe that," was the answer. "He asked me to cash the cheque in the garden directly after breakfast; he said he had received it from you. He went straight to the study, and I gave him the money there and then in bank-notes."

"I believe it is scarcely your custom to carry so much money about with you," said Spearing, sarcastically. "Perhaps you will explain where you obtained such a sum?"

Aware of the normal condition of Clement's banking-account, he could speak with authority.

Before answering, Clement turned his back upon the banker, and addressed himself directly to his father.

"I was—I was at Epsom on Wednesday, sir; I won the money there. I had the tip for 'Farmer;' he started at twenty-four to one; I backed him for a tenner, and of course I won."

No one knew better than Clement his father's deeply-rooted objection to racing. There was a painful hesitation in his manner which told severely against him. He had looked for an outbreak; but, instead, there was a dismal silence, which was a thousand times worse.

"Can you furnish proof of your assertion?" demanded Sir Edward Spearing, after a whispered word with Mr. Northcott.

"Proof; how can I give you proof? I was never at the Derby before in my life. I should not know the men again if I were to see them. I give you my word, and that is all I have to give."

To bet and lose was in Mr. Northcott's opinion a perfectly easy and rational process; but to bet and win was inconceivable.

Now Clement had either won the money or he had not won it. Either he had spoken the truth about the cheque, or he had lied. If he had won the money, it was possible that he changed the cheque at the time he stated. If he had not won the money at the Derby, he

could not have given Mr. Litton two hundred pounds before himself receiving that sum from the bank.

But it was unlikely that he had won the money and forged the cheque as well. Yet his admission that he had been to the Derby and there made a bet, furnished to Mr. Northcott strong evidence of his son's guilt.

In the father's opinion the one offence was but a little more heinous than the other. If Clement could bet, he might do anything else that was bad. If he could bet, he might almost as easily commit forgery.

The silence became painful. Sir Edward Spearing's hand rested sympathetically on Mr. Northcott's shoulder; Mrs. Northcott glanced with approval at her brother. Not that she was without pity for Clement, who had been to her as a son since he was three years old; but she was proud of Mr. Litton, who, in showing that he was innocent of a despicable crime, appeared to place himself in an advantageous light.

Mr. Litton was the first to speak:

"Northcott," he said, "I have been foully slandered by your son. I must consider my own reputation. I demand that a doctor be at once sent for. Anderson is in the garden; perhaps you will send for him. He will easily convince you that it was, and is, an impossibility for me to hold a pen, much less to use one. I only want what is fair."

In vain did Spearing urge the desirability of hushing the affair up; in vain did he assure Mr. Litton that his character was unstained. That gentleman insisted, and Mrs. Northcott went to seek Anderson.

During the last half hour Clement seemed to have changed his nature. He had entered that room a bright, merry-hearted boy; he would leave it a gloomy, sorrow-stricken man.

Not doubting that he was summoned to Mr. Northcott, Anderson would have gone straight to his couch; but Mr. Litton intercepted him.

Clement stood apart from the rest; his dejection contrasting strongly with Mr. Litton's air of bravado.

"Anderson," said the latter, "I want you to examine my arm."

"I have done so once this morning. To do so again will be unnecessary and injurious as well."

But Mr. Litton insisted.

"I want you to tell Mr. Northcott and Sir Edward Spearing whether it is possible

for me to hold a pen between my fingers."

"I can do that without undoing your bandages," said Anderson, as he took his patient's powerless fingers in his own. "The bone has not joined; your hand has no power whatever."

"That is enough," faltered Mr. Northcott, chafing at what seemed such unnecessary trifling.

"Very well," exclaimed Mr. Litton, "if you are satisfied, I guess I'll make myself scarce."

There was that in his manner, as he left the room, which jarred upon everybody but Mrs. Northcott.

"I merely make the suggestion," said Spearing—whilst Anderson drew closer to Mr. Northcott, whose evident weakness hindered him from leaving the room as he would have wished—"but is it possible the forgery was committed before Mr. Litton met with his accident?"

For one moment Clement's face brightened, to cloud again as soon as he heard Mrs. Northcott's ready answer.

"My brother broke his arm the day after his arrival," she said distinctly; "and on the day he came he was not out of my presence for a single hour."

"What have you to say for yourself?" demanded Mr. Northcott, as Sir Edward Spearing drew on his glove.

Clement abruptly turned to face them. Folding his arms and throwing back his head, he appeared to greater advantage now that his situation could no longer be affected by appearances, than he had throughout the interview.

"I have nothing to say; nothing more than I have said already. I have told you the truth. My uncle has lied, and you prefer to believe his lie. That is all."

"But," answered Spearing, not unkindly, "however desirous we may be to believe you, it is not possible to accept your statement. Had you told us at first all that you admit now, your case might have been stronger; but you prevaricated. You accuse Mr. Litton of shuffling, whereas it is you who have shuffled. You told us that you gave him the notes after luncheon, or, at least your words conveyed that meaning to me. As soon as you were confronted with Mr. Litton you altered your story to suit his contradiction. But after all, this is mere waste of words. It is proved beyond a doubt that he could not have forged your father's name; it

certainly rests between you and Mr. Litton. Who then but yourself could have done it?"

"I have told you I did not do it," Clement declared. "Mr. Litton has lied to you."

Spearing shrugged his shoulders expressively, and turned towards Mr. Northcott, who seemed to be rallying himself to speak. A hot-tempered man, he had hitherto placed a great control over himself; but now the time had come when he could remain silent no longer.

"It is you—you, Clement, who lie—you, who are not ashamed to accuse another of your own crime. Your whole life has prepared you for this. I know your motives; the debts of which you were afraid to tell me, but which you were too careless to hide from my wife. Go from my sight," he cried, pointing his trembling hand towards the door. "I pray to Heaven I may never see your face again as long as I live! It will not be long. You have dealt my death-blow."

His ashen face, his utter prostration as he sank backwards on the couch, gave greater force to his words.

Anderson was already at his side, motioning silently that Clement should leave the room, to avoid the possibility of further excitement.

Maud and Brownie had followed Anderson from the garden and were waiting outside Mr. Northcott's door, eager for intelligence as to his condition.

Until his last words had reached their ears, they had suspected nothing of the real state of affairs. But now Maud was possessed by ugly fears, whilst Brownie remembered the words which Clement had spoken on Friday under the apple-tree. He had told her that he feared some great trouble, if his father discovered his possession of those bank-notes. It seemed that his fear had been realised.

"Clement!" they cried together, as he came out, pale and haggard, from Mr. Northcott's room. "Clement!"

But he paid no heed, and, brushing past them with bowed head and hard-set face, left the house without a word.

OUR YEOMANRY CAVALRY.

IN a recent number of the "Nineteenth Century" there was an article by Viscount Melgund, taking exception to the present constitution and cost of the Yeomanry.

Whilst admitting generally the justice of these remarks, there are some points which are not quite in accordance with the facts of the case. The question that naturally arises is: "Can an effective cavalry force be made in the annual ten days' training as required by the War Office regulations?" This question must, I think, be answered in the negative.

In the case of the Volunteers, the shooting mania is carried to excess, whilst in the case of the Yeomanry, it is almost totally neglected. Shooting, however, does not mean efficiency; and, as an ex-officer of Volunteers, I venture to assert, without fear of contradiction, that the shooting men of a regiment are not, as a rule, the most efficient at drill. It is true that the shooting man is always "efficient," as he takes care to attend the requisite number of drills, otherwise he would be debarred from prize shooting.

The Volunteers have far more opportunities of becoming good shots than the Yeomanry; the former being allowed ninety rounds of ammunition per man, whilst the latter get thirty rounds only. Then, again, the members of a Yeomanry troop are generally widely scattered over a district, and have few opportunities of meeting for practice. The fact, too, of being armed with an inferior weapon places them at a disadvantage, as it will not be contended that the Martini-Henry carbine can compete on equal terms with the Martini-Henry rifle either for range or accuracy.

An alteration has recently been made in the Yeomanry shooting regulations, by which the ranges for practice have been restricted to three hundred yards. At present, therefore, the firing takes place at one hundred, two hundred, and three hundred yards; the sight, being fixed at two hundred and fifty yards, rendering it necessary to aim at the lower part of the target at the first two ranges, and at the top of the target at the last range; but whether this will be an improvement on the old system remains to be seen.

The Yeomanry, as a body, is composed chiefly of farmers and men who ride their own horses, although, in the vicinity of large towns, men of a different class are enrolled. In the latter case it too frequently happens that the recruit is no rider. He may be able to sit on a military saddle; but he has neither "hands" nor "seat," and, unfortunately, these defects are not capable of being remedied in the short

time allowed for drill, especially as there is neither riding-school nor riding-master attached to the regiments. In the case, too, of a bad rider, there is no sympathy between horse and man, and this renders the horse less handy in the ranks, and is a constant cause of confusion. More care should be exercised in recruiting, and quality, not quantity, be aimed at; but at present the Permanent-Sergeant-Major is anxious to keep the troop up to the maximum number, without regard to the suitability of the men.

The élite of a Yeomanry Troop is undoubtedly the farming class—men who ride good horses, who take a pride in being well mounted, and who know every road and bridle path in their respective districts. These are the men whose services would prove invaluable in case of invasion, and who are pre-eminently suited for reconnoitring and outpost duty, and yet this is a portion of the drill that is most neglected.

To be "efficient," that is, to earn the capitation grant, a trooper is required to attend six squad drills (dismounted), five troop drills (mounted), and eight days' permanent duty. The dismounted drills are generally held at some central spot, frequently at a market-town, on market days; whilst it has been found more convenient to hold the mounted drills two days previous to the commencement of the permanent duty. The time devoted to the troop-drills is generally occupied in simple movements, so as to accustom the horses to each other, and to afford instruction to the recruits. Of the eight days' permanent duty, two are frequently occupied in travelling to and from the place of assembly, and the remaining six days are devoted chiefly to drilling in squadrons and half-squadrons, sword exercise, and last, but not least, to marching past. In fact, the whole of the drill seems intended to ensure steadiness in the march past and inspection. Surely a thorough knowledge of outpost work, reconnoitring, skirmishing, and flag signalling, would more than counterbalance any deficiencies in steadiness in marching past the Inspecting Officer. It frequently occurs that a troop, during the whole of the training, is not once dismounted for skirmishing practice, neither is a single blank cartridge fired. It is also open to question if, on an average, one-third of the members of a troop know the meaning of the various trumpet calls.

No doubt the present system of drill is the correct one, if, in case of actual service, the Yeomanry is intended to act en masse with the regular cavalry; but if, on the other hand, it is intended to utilise the local knowledge of the men for ascertaining the capabilities of the country, and for supplying particulars of roads, bridges, etc., then the system of drill is radically wrong in its most essential points. The non-commissioned officers in many troops are appointed according to seniority alone, no regard being had to their fitness for the post, and no examination held to test their knowledge of drill, etc. This needs altering, and men selected for non-commissioned officers should at least know all the trumpet-calls, have sufficient knowledge of drawing to enable them to furnish a rough sketch of a portion of the country, showing its principal features, together with a brief description of its resources; and they should also be acquainted with flag signalling.

The hours of drill are too long for horses unaccustomed to the work, and are the cause of a good many cases of sickness. It does not seem to be borne in mind that horses, which in many cases are young and not in hard condition, are unable to bear the bucketing and knocking about that they get in the ranks for five or six hours daily, especially when it is considered that, owing to the weight of the military saddlery and accoutrements, they are carrying from two to three stone more than they would do in the hunting-field.

In the case of farmers the horses are almost without exception their own property; but borrowed horses are extensively used by men hailing from towns.

As a rule the horses are of the hunter, or roadster type, ranging from fifteen hands upwards; and in many cases valuable horses are brought up by their owners, partly from a feeling of pride in being well mounted, and partly with the object of getting a good purchaser.

As an instance of this I may mention that last year a horse in the troop to which I belong was sold for one hundred and thirty pounds; and I know of others for which big prices were refused. During the last two years Government officers have attended at the annual training for the purpose of purchasing horses for remounts for the regular cavalry; but, owing to various reasons, few transactions have taken place. The horses required must be above four and under six years old,

of a good stamp, undocked, and the price is limited to forty-two pounds.

It is the exception to find a farmer's horse undocked, whether intended for harness or the hunting-field, as in the former case a high-spirited horse is useless for harness purposes unless docked; and in the latter case it is a matter of custom; and although docking has been condemned as cruelty, still the practice obtains.

Sickness amongst the horses varies considerably with the weather. In some years there are numerous cases of colds and coughs, whilst in other years these cases are almost entirely absent. Sore backs occasionally occur; but chiefly with young horses. One source of sickness is due to the drill season commencing in May, and at that time many horses are casting their coats, and are, consequently, more susceptible to disease. Many horses, too, that are brought from warm stables at home where they receive every attention, and the best of provender, are, during the annual training, put into draughty stables, fed on indifferent food, and are in addition harder worked.

Accidents during drill occur but rarely; especially when we take into consideration the number of young horses that are annually used as chargers. Of course there is a certain amount of risk attendant on the drill; and an allowance, not exceeding thirty pounds, is made by Government, under certain circumstances, for each horse killed during the actual performance of duty. Slight injuries, caused by kicks, occasionally occur to both horses and men; but serious accidents are almost unknown.

It was at one time customary for ordinary hunting-saddles to be used by the Yeomanry; but it was found advisable to substitute the cumbersome horse-furniture at present in use.

This consists of the ordinary military saddle, with holsters and carbine bucket, crupper, breast-plate, picket-chain, head-stall, and curb and snaffle-bridle. The cloak, also, is folded and strapped to the front of the saddle, and a sheep-skin is used over the saddle when on escort or special duty. In addition to the saddlery already mentioned, the outfit of a trooper consists of a dress-jacket, stable-jacket, overalls, pants, busby, forage cap, two pair of spurs, sash, sword, pouch and belts, knee boots and white gloves; the whole of which—boots, gloves, and stirrup-leathers alone excepted—are supplied by the regiment.

It has been urged against the Yeomanry that their accoutrements, etc., are costly and unserviceable; and it has been estimated that the outfit of each recruit costs on an average twenty pounds. This estimate, however, must be considerably reduced, as twelve pounds would probably cover the entire cost; and, at all events, the clothing fund of our regiment has been able to meet all demands made upon it, without entailing any extra expense on the officers. The uniform is calculated to last from five to ten years, although in actual practice, this time is, perhaps, over-estimated.

A recruit on joining his troop does not receive a completely new outfit, although care is taken that the appointments issued to him are in good condition, with as many new articles as may be necessary. To secure the regiment against loss, a recruit, on receiving his equipment, is required to sign an agreement to partially repay the cost, provided he resigns within three years, the amount being fixed at five pounds the first year, three pounds the second, and one pound the third year. The cost of the band is defrayed by an annual subscription from the officers.

It is stated that the Yeomanry is a paid body of men; but if a closer examination is made, it will be found that the amount granted as pay has to be substantially increased by the trooper before it will cover his actual outlay. Pay is allowed at the rate of three shillings and sixpence per day for the two days devoted to troop-drills, provided two-thirds of the troop be present; and seven shillings and sixpence for each day of permanent duty. Out of this, however, the trooper has to provide accommodation for himself and horse, not to mention the considerable inroad made by, in many cases, a railway journey of from thirty to sixty miles.

It appears that greater facilities should be granted by the railway companies to members of the Yeomanry. Until recently, it was the practice of at least one Company to charge the ordinary fares for man and horse when travelling to attend the annual training, but, owing to the strong representation made to the Company, the horses are now conveyed at a single fare for the double journey, although the troopers are still charged the ordinary fare both ways. Were a still further reduction made, it would enable the members of a troop to assemble for an occasional mounted drill at some central point, during the interval between the annual assembly.

During the annual assembly the men are not billeted, but are allowed to make whatever arrangements may be most convenient. The consequence is, that the men are quartered at the various hotels in the town; and it is probable that this system does not tend to ensure soldier-like conduct, as after the drill for the day is over, the men are left entirely to their own resources; and, although in theory no man is supposed to appear in the streets in civilian attire, yet, in practice, this injunction is generally disregarded. Occasionally foot-parades take place in the afternoon; the drill is then confined to sword and carbine exercises.

With regard to the suggestion that troopers should provide their own uniform, it is evident in these days of agricultural depression, which affect most strongly the class of men who form the majority of the Yeomanry force, that any additional expense entailed on them would at once cause a considerable diminution in the numbers. Even now the expense incurred during the ten days' permanent drill is the chief cause why many regiments are short of men. No doubt greater efficiency would be secured were it definitely stated for what duties the Yeomanry regiments are intended in case of actual warfare, and the drill could then be adapted to meet those requirements.

The Yeomanry now form the nucleus of a most valuable branch of the auxiliary forces, and their knowledge of the general aspects of the country would be of the greatest service in case of invasion. Changes in the system of drill, or even in the arming of the force might probably be introduced with advantage; but to introduce radical changes with a view of altering the complete constitution of the Yeomanry Cavalry, would inevitably be followed by a diminution in the number of the members, accompanied at the same time by a reduction in the quality of the article.

SOME NATIONAL GAINS.

IN considering some of our national losses, in the way of types of character, a short time ago,* it probably occurred to some readers that, if many curious social products, which were once common, are

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, Third Series, No. 14, April 6, 1889.

now extinct, others, not perhaps less interesting for being exclusively the outcome of the nineteenth century, have taken their places.

Their number is much greater than that of our losses, for impatience of routine and the desire to get out of old grooves are the leading characteristics of this restless age. And it is noteworthy that it is more especially among women that this is the case. Those, nowadays, compelled by necessity to earn their own living, have launched out into all kinds of enterprises for themselves, abandoning the eternal rôle of governess, which, fifty years ago, was the only employment for gentlewomen. Indeed, so numerous are the resources of the fair sex at the present day, that two or three articles might be devoted to them alone.

We will begin the list with the Professional Chaperon, who is the exclusive product of this century. Imagine the horror of the great ladies of two or three generations back at the idea of making a living by taking up the daughters of rich snobs, presenting them at Court, chaperoning them for a season or two until they marry, and then recommending the process with another heiress, *ad infinitum*!

Of course we do not assert that the thing was never done in the good old times, but at all events it was not then a matter of course for advertisements from matrons for girls to chaperon, and from girls anxious to find matrons to take them under their wing, to constantly appear in the papers. Each party now advertises for the other as coolly as Mrs. Jones for a cook or Mrs. Thompson for a governess; and there is no doubt each finds what she wants.

There are peeresses now in London society who make a handsome income by receiving rich girls into their houses; and, although it is perfectly well known, nobody thinks any the worse of them. But it is probable that when, in after years, Lady A. encounters her former protégée, Lady B., the great fishmonger's daughter, at Marlborough House, she may at times have a lurking recollection of having told that now-fashionable dame, in the early days of their acquaintance, not to eat peas with a knife; or that Lady B. may recall, as she entertains Lady A. at a magnificent dinner in her own house, the exceeding smallness and fewness of the mutton cutlets which formed the staple of that lady's menu when she resided under her roof before her marriage.

The Society Actress is already a very familiar figure, both in fiction and in real life. There is something to be said on both sides of the question; for, while the surroundings of the stage are full of temptation for some, on the other hand, no really good and modest woman need come to grief there more than anywhere else, if she chooses. It is largely a matter of individual temperament: a view of the case which is equally ignored by those who preach that all theatres are the invention of the Evil One, and those who gushingly represent stage-life as a smiling paradise, where all is joy and bliss.

There are many society actors among the ranks of professionals. More than one man of high social position has a son who has abandoned all other pursuits in order to go on the stage, and has never regretted his choice. Indeed, a popular player at a high-class theatre has much to sweeten his lot, and can afford to look down upon the briefless barrister or the struggling physician, even although he be not yet a gentleman by Act of Parliament.

Whatever be her ultimate fate, the Lady Shopkeeper is at present undoubtedly among our national gains; though whether she will ever crystallise into a permanent type, it is at present impossible to predict. Many ladies, whose incomes are reduced from failure of rent or other causes, not knowing what else to do, have opened shops—usually under assumed names—for the sale of dresses, millinery, old furniture, and bric-à-brac. Opinions vary regarding the wisdom of such a step; for, while a very large class of persons would give almost any price to a genuine member of the aristocracy for a bonnet or a Chipendale table, others again, of higher rank, shrink from making their little pet weaknesses known to a social equal, or endeavouring to bargain with a woman whom they will probably meet that same evening in the drawing-room of some mutual friend. Still, the attempt is praiseworthy. It is certainly more commendable to sell bonnets for a livelihood, than to sponge upon wealthy relatives, or fasten, as an additional incubus, upon the already overburdened pension-list of the country, as in the bad old days when no "lady of quality" ever thought of earning an income.

The Lady Nurse and the Lady Cook are also two new developments. A very large number of the medical profession—very wisely, we think—now choose their wives

from among the young ladies who abandon luxurious homes to undergo thorough training in some hospital; so that the career of a nurse may even be said to have a romantic side. The calling of the Lady Cook may appear less poetical; but there are many ladies, both here and in America, who make good incomes by superintending dinner-parties and ball-suppers, decorating the tables, and undertaking the more delicate culinary operations themselves.

The Professional Lawn-Tennis Player, male and female, is also another gain to society. We apologise most humbly for the designation, for we are well aware that (happily) there are no "professional" lawn-tennis players in this country. But the game has now become the serious occupation of so many young men and women of leisure, that it is difficult not to regard it as a distinct calling. The player of the highest grade is a sad and earnest person, whose whole life is spent in trying to get "fifteen better" than anybody else; and when he or she at length attains that exalted position, sleepless nights and laborious days are spent in the effort to maintain it. Those innocent persons who look upon lawn-tennis merely as a pleasant pastime, would be met by a smile of contemptuous pity from a crack player. Morning, noon, and night, all the year round, the stars do nothing but practise the game. In the summer they move about from one tournament to another, winning all the best prizes; and when autumn comes they fly to Cannes, Nice, or Algiers to pursue their favourite occupation. In the case of ladies such devotion is the mere praiseworthy, because of the real sacrifices it entails. The lady-player, who really means business, has to let her appearance go. She must play, hail, rain, or shine—her face burnt in the sun, and freckled in the wind—while all feminine prettiness of apparel is sacrificed to the stout, serviceable garments, heelless shoes, and plain hats, which alone are suitable. A flutter of ribbons and laces about her, tight shoes, or a hat perched insecurely on her head, would "put her off her stroke" altogether. Of course there are some who contrive to combine play with prettiness; but they are in the minority.

We reminded our readers in our former paper that the haughty nobleman of the Sir Leicester Dedlock school is rapidly disappearing beneath the Juggernaut car of progress. We are sorry to be obliged to

add that his modern successor is not always an improvement upon the old type, for the Shady Nobleman just now is very much "en évidence," as is also the Shady Noblewoman. Whether it is that a cheap press has brought his failings more into prominence, or that great families no longer think it worth the trouble to hush up the scandals which would once have been sedulously concealed, certain it is that the Shady Nobleman continues to engage an ever-increasing share of public attention. In the divorce court, on the racecourse, in the lists of bankrupts, even in the chronicles of the police, his name is continually to be found. We need give no instances. They are, unfortunately, only too familiar to the minds of all.

And, alas! equally prominent in these levelling days is the Shady Peeress, very often the consort of the Shady Nobleman. She also appears with lamentable frequency in the papers, and really seems to enjoy it. Frequently sprung from the very gutter, she has, perhaps while engaged at some fast theatre or music-hall, succeeded in captivating some foolish young aristocrat, whose social descent, aided by such a wife, is only a question of time. She, too, appears at all the Courts, save that of Her Majesty. She is at once unknown, and yet too well-known in society, which chronicles her peccadilloes, while it strenuously refuses to receive her into its bosom.

It might be supposed that common-sense would induce women raised from the very dregs of society to be wives of men of high rank, to behave themselves, so as to retain the regard of their husbands. But too often they bring the manners and morals of the slums of Pimlico or St. John's Wood with them as their sole dowry; and the infatuated young noodle who has thrown himself away upon some painted, disreputable creature, lives to bitterly repent his folly in degrading himself by a mésalliance.

Both the Shady Nobleman and the Shady Noblewoman belong emphatically to the category of people who would not be missed—save by the newspaper-proprietors, who rely upon the scandals in high life to increase their circulation. These scandals have a most injurious effect upon the morals of the community at large; because, whilst right-minded people regard a sin, whether committed by the Duke of Blankshire, or John Jones, the

coastermonger, as equally heinous, the great mass of the ignorant population—and it must not be forgotten that Mrs. Brown at the wash-tub, and Tom the grocer's boy, are now as much interested in fashionable failings as their betters—think that because people in high stations offend against honour and morality, it is a kind of permission to them to go and do likewise.

To turn to a pleasanter topic, we are at once in Arcadia with the writer of "Reminiscences." He is a distinctly modern creation, for, though there have been many Reminiscents before, they were usually of the spiteful and ungracious order. Besides, their autobiographies came before the public chiefly in the form of letters published after their death—a kind of Parthian shot at their enemies from the grave. The modern writer is careful to publish his book in his lifetime, so that the profits may go to his or her own account, and not merely serve to enrich the heirs. And, whether male or female, the burden of all is the same—all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds.

There never was such a kind, indulgent public as the British public; there never were such courteous critics; there never existed such an admirable press! nobody ever had so many kind friends before! The Reminiscencer's own calling—painting, sculpture, novel-writing, or what not—is the most charming of all professions; and, in fact, everything is calculated to make the outsider turn green with envy.

The British public, which had stupidly believed that artists and literary people are no more exempt from the weaknesses of humanity than less gifted mortals, and that squabbling and jealousy are as rife on Parnassus as on Primrose Hill, has had to alter that opinion.

Blank, the sculptor, writes a book, in which he eulogises everything and everybody, but especially his dear friends, A, B, and C, who is each, in his own line, the cleverest and best of good fellows. In their turn, A, B and C also write their "Reminiscences," in which they refer in terms of the highest praise to their dear friend, Blank, the sculptor, of whose genius they cannot say enough, and to their other esteemed comrades D, E, and F, who, in their turn, are equally complimentary to Messrs. G, H, and I; and so the ball is kept rolling.

To give the thing a greater air of "vraisemblance," some few are candid enough to touch lightly on their early struggles,

when a dinner or a pair of boots was a consideration. But all wind up with some grand, congratulatory dinner or presentation, with the inevitable personal assurance from the Prince of Wales, that that particular Reminiscencer is, and always has been, His Royal Highness's most admired actor, artist, or novelist, as the case may be.

It would be a difficult matter to decide whether the modern doctor or the modern patient has the more completely broken away from the shackles of conventionality. Fifty years ago, calling in the doctor was a serious affair, producing such results in the way of huge boluses and dozens of bottles of the most nauseous medicine, to say nothing of cupping, leeching, and blistering, that only persons of the very strongest constitution could venture to summon medical aid.

It was an age of blind faith, when the solemn fiat of a physician was sufficient to launch any absurdity: such as tar water, or piercing the ears for the purpose of improving the sight. But the modern patient has become sceptical and rebellious, not to say self-opinionated and domineering. He believes his doctor to be no more infallible than any other man, and tells him candidly that he does not believe in ruining his system with a lot of drugs, to which the disciple of Galen replies:

"Quite right, my dear sir. It's a great mistake, and we never prescribe much now."

The patient is also allowed his choice of diet, with a freedom unheard of in the days of toast-and-water and barley-broth.

"Eat what you fancy, my dear sir," enjoins the accommodating physician. "You can judge what suits you better than I can," and he winks at the consumption of various delicacies, the mention of any one of which as suitable for a sick man would have sent the old-time doctor into a fit. This new-born arrogance of patients, and subservience of physicians, causes the enquiring mind to wonder whether, in a generation or two, men will not refuse to call in doctors at all.

And last, and most beautiful production of all, we have got the Cheap Tripper. It may safely be affirmed that preceding ages knew him not. The Cheap Tripper is essentially the creation of the Age of Steam, before which era travelling for pleasure was a luxury confined to the wealthy classes alone. Now there is not a

man or woman, however poor, who does not endeavour to have at least one day during the year in the country, or at the seaside, to show that they can afford to take their ease as well as those above them. If the Cheap Tripper is not precisely a thing of beauty, he is certainly a joy for ever; for now that we have got him, he will stay with us to the end of time.

He is a gregarious animal; for it appears to be a point of honour with him not to travel without "missus and the little 'uns." If single, he takes his young woman with him by the excursion train, supplies her liberally with the cheap and generally unwholesome refreshments in which his soul delights, and gallantly presents her with a mug or a shell-box with "A present from Margate" or "Southend" on it, as a souvenir of an 'appy day. If he and 'Arriet have been violently ill during the sixpenny sail which is "de rigueur," they console themselves by having their likenesses taken by an itinerant photographer, or a donkey-ride; and they will sing Moody and Sankey hymns, or the latest music-hall ditty, with undiminished ardour all the way home, with spirits quite unimpaired by the unholy lateness of the hour at which excursion trains usually return to their starting-point. To set off about five a.m., to journey incessantly for five or six hours, to rush about all day eating unripe fruit and shell-fish, and return home in the wee sma' hours—who would dare to say that the Cheap Tripper's idea of a day's pleasure is not absolutely Spartan in its heroism?

HER INHERITANCE.

A STRANGE STORY. IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

IN a little room in a dreary London house, a woman lay asleep on a sofa, and a man sat near her with an open letter in his hand. It was a lodging-house sitting-room, evidently—there is something about a "furnished apartment" which is not to be effaced or disguised without much care and skill, and this room bore token of neither one nor the other. It was a November afternoon, and the rain had been falling all day with that dull, dreary, depressing persistence which is characteristic of November rain in London; and though it was only four o'clock, the room was lighted rather by the flickering fire

than by the light from without, which only seemed to intensify the dreariness within, as it brooded over those corners in which it still ruled, seeming to keep its brighter rival at bay.

The shabby specimen of the hard, slippery, horsehair class of sofa on which the woman lay, was drawn up close to the fire, and the dancing flames threw their uncertain light full on her face. It was so white, that even the red glow failed to give it colour; and as she lay sleeping there, her only expression one of pain and distress, it was impossible to tell whether, in health and animation, she might or might not have been pretty. It was a young face—not more than nineteen, apparently, framed in pale yellow hair, which fell somewhat untidily about it, and it was worn with pain and illness; the mouth was very sensitive and expressive, but lacking in strength, as was the delicate chin. The fading daylight grew fainter and fainter, the firelight triumphed and reigned in every corner, and still she lay asleep; and still the man sat motionless by her side. As he watched her, he saw her face lose the strained look of pain, and a happy smile curve her white lips. What was she dreaming of? Ah, he knew well enough that her dreams were always the same—he could almost conjure up before his own eyes, as he sat there in the desolate room, the scenes in which she was roaming so happily in dreamland. Had she not told him of them again and again? Were not those dreams the happiness of her life?

She is standing at a casement window, in the early morning light. She has just jumped up from the little wooden bedstead standing in a corner of the room behind her, and opened the window, that the sweet, pure air may fill the little room, as she turns to the oak bureau and dresses herself. On the wide window-ledge are pots of sweet-smelling plants—scented geranium, "lemon"-plant, and musk, and round the window climbs a rose, whose buds peep in on her as she throws back the casement. As she stands there, looking out, she sees directly underneath a quaint farmhouse garden, its trim, close-cut grass, its roses—red, white, and pink—its old-fashioned sweet-williams, stocks, and sweet-peas, all fresh, and dripping with the morning dew. Farther away, dim and indistinct in the mist, which the sun has not yet had time to disperse, she sees green corn, and fields,

where haymaking is already going on, and as the scent of the hay, and the song of a rising lark come to her through the cool, sweet, morning air, she hears her mother's voice cry, "Dorothy, Dorothy!"

This is the low, oak-beamed room where she learnt her lessons, and sat at her mother's feet to learn the mysteries of plain needlework. There is her little stool and her book; the leg of the table still bears the marks made long ago by little kicking feet. How often she has watched the pictures in the fire, sitting there in the old oak settle. Into the wide, low entrance hall now! There is the large oak chest in which she used to hide; and up and down those shallow stairs she has passed day by day for eighteen years. Ah, here, at their head, is her own little room. Here, and under the willow down by the brook which flows through the farm, she has looked all her joys and sorrows in the face since first she had any sense of joy or sorrow. The position of the furniture, the pattern of the paper here, the sound of the rustling willow leaves, the look of the clear blue sky as it shines through, these are woven into her very life, for they have associated themselves with her deepest mental experiences. It was in this little room that she shed the first bitter tears of her life—tears for her dead mother. It was under the willow two years later that she heard the words: "Dorothy, I love you. Will you be my wife?"

It was in this little room again——

The figure on the sofa stirred and moaned a little, and the man bent forward and watched it anxiously as the distressed expression returned to the pale face.

"Never to come back again! Never to see my home any more! Oh, my home! my home! Oh!"

The moan became a cry; the thin features were convulsed with pain; and the man knelt down by the sofa and said, softly:

"Dorothy, Dorothy!"

She woke with a start, and opening her large, blue eyes, which shone with a wild, hungry light, she stretched out her thin hands towards him and cried:

"Philip, Philip, has it come? Has he answered? Will he let me go home?"

The man made no answer. He gathered the trembling hands into his own, and kissed them tenderly.

"Philip, there is a letter! Oh, tell me! I may go home, Philip!"

"My darling, try to be quiet—try to be brave. There is a letter, but——"

"He says—no!"

"He says—no."

He was gazing into her eyes as he spoke with heart-sick anxiety as to the effect of his words. A little shock seemed to pass across her face, leaving it grey and drawn; and she fell back panting a little, her eyes still fixed on him, but with their light gone.

"Dorothy! Oh, my poor love!"

"Read me the letter."

"No, no. Dorothy——"

"Read me the letter."

He obeyed; and by the uncertain light of the fire read:

"SIR,—You ask my permission to bring your wife to my house, on the plea that she has suffered severely from home-sickness, and that, in her present state of health, her life is endangered thereby. Failing my consent to this, you ask me to 'satisfy her sick fancy,' by a promise that her child—should it survive—shall be allowed 'to learn to know and love its mother's home.' In acceding to either of these requests I should break the word which I passed to my step-daughter when she became your wife—that neither she nor hers should ever cross my threshold again.—I am, etc., JAMES FARMER."

As he finished reading, the man crushed the letter in his hand with a gesture of utter loathing and contempt, and, turning again to the woman beside him, he took her into his arms.

"Dorothy, my love, be brave. Don't look like that! Why did I ever come into your life? What can I do for you? Dorothy, Dorothy! Is my love nothing to you?"

She looked up at him with a strange, yearning expression in her blue eyes—the look of an animal that cannot understand or explain its feelings, and only knows that it suffers.

"Oh, Philip, yes!" she said. "You know, you know! Only my home! Oh, if I were strong it would be different; but lying here thinking, thinking all day long, I cannot keep my mind from my past life: my childhood, my mother, and my home. When I sleep, I go back there always in my dreams; and when I wake—oh, Philip, I cannot understand myself. I cannot put it into words. I love you, dear, indeed, indeed I do; but I long, I long—I am dying for my old home."

Her weak voice rang with a despairing,

yearning cry ; and the man who loved her and who was impotent to satisfy the sick craving which he had seen for months eating away her life, knelt by her side in the now dying firelight, and with his lips pressed to her thin, white hands while she went on :

"And then I thought that if I could know that my child would know the place I love so much, that I could leave my love of it to my child, I could bear it. I could bear to die here — away from it. But now—oh, Philip, Philip, Philip !"

It was her last appeal. A few hours later, as her baby opened its eyes on the world, Dorothy's short life, her joys and her troubles, came to an end. Her aching, longing pain was soothed by the kindly hand of death ; and her husband and her little daughter were alone together.

CHAPTER II.

"HUBERT, are you coming ? Hubert, it is really getting late ! Hubert !"

The speaker was standing with her back against a five-barred gate, in an attitude half resigned, half impatient.

"What a pretty little woman !" was what people said at first sight of Mrs. Hubert Ferrars, though she was only three-and-twenty. A certain atmosphere of completeness pervaded her, mentally and physically, which it was impossible to associate with girlishness. Whether it lay in her self-possessed manner, in the self-reliant glance of the quick, observant, blue eyes ; or whether, as some people asserted, she owed it to the beautiful way in which her fair hair was dressed—always in the very latest fashion—on the top of her little head, or to the perfect fashionable simplicity of her always-appropriate dress, no one could decide ; but the fact remained that she had been a "pretty little woman," almost as soon as she ceased to be a "pretty little child."

Receiving no answer to her call, she turned and looked over the field, across which she had sauntered ten minutes before, at a man who was sitting before an easel at the top of the green slope, which swept up from where she stood, evidently too deeply absorbed in his work to be reached by a voice from which he was separated—even in a material sense—by the width of a whole field.

Mrs. Ferrars and her husband had come to the neighbouring village on the previous evening, that the latter might make studies

for a picture, and it was her first experience of English country. Though her parents had been English, she had lived all her life in St. Petersburg ; and there Hubert Ferrars, on a holiday journey, had met her, loved her—their friends said from force of contrast—and married her. But they had been sitting out of doors all day long, and, though she had been impressed by the scenery at first—strangely impressed her husband had thought—Mrs. Ferrars felt that ten hours of it was almost enough.

"Oh, dear old goose," she murmured to herself, "he is buried again, and I really thought he meant to come this time. Must I go back ? I'll try another call first."

She made a speaking trumpet of both hands this time, and with a little laugh in her voice, called, "Coo-ee ! coo-ee !"

This time her voice reached him, and he looked up with a start.

"How—much—longer !" the laughing voice demanded.

She kept her eyes fixed on him as he put his things together, lest he should relapse again, and then, as he joined her, she said :

"Well, thank goodness ! Do you know how often you have said 'I'll come,' and have not come, in the course of the last hour ? No, don't apologise, sir ! Be thankful that you have a wife who knows the value of your eyesight."

He was a tall, quiet-looking man, with dark hair, and very dark-brown eyes, in which there was usually an absent, far-away expression. They were not absent now, however, as he looked down at the little woman at his side ; they were full of love and contentment, and their expression was reflected in the blue ones that met them. When their mutual friends had exclaimed at what was apparently such an ill-assorted match, Hubert Ferrars had declared that he was the only person in the world who really appreciated his wife, popular as she was ; and Mrs. Ferrars had asserted that nobody ever could, would, or should understand her dreamy, reserved, unpractical husband as she did. It was two years since these theories were first formulated, and they held to them more firmly than ever.

She took his camp-stool from him now, slipped her other hand through his arm, and they walked slowly through the fields towards the little cottage where they were staying. On reaching it, they paused a moment, and looked down the little village

street. The sun was setting, and the seven elms that stood in a row a little further down the street, separating the school-house from the little village shop, cast long shadows over the winding road and the primitive apology for a pavement. The low, thatched cottages on the opposite side were bathed in a crimson glow, except where the trees threw their shadows, and the little diamond window-panes flashed and sparkled in the light.

"How pretty and quaint!" said Mrs. Ferrara. "I never saw anything at all like it. Ah!" breaking off suddenly, "look, Hubert, there is that woman again. Let us see if she will look at me this time."

The woman in question had just come out of the dark little shop, and was standing, dazzled for a moment by the bright reflection from the windows opposite, shading her eyes with her hand. She was an ordinary-looking woman enough, with one of those rather stern, strong, wrinkled faces to be seen by the dozen in any country village. She crossed the road, out of the way of the dazzling light, and as she did so she suddenly became aware of Hubert Ferrars and his wife. A sort of spasm passed across her face, and she came slowly up the street, fixing her eyes on Mrs. Ferrars with a look which it was hard to define—half recognition, half question, all perplexity, and—yes, there could be no doubt about it—fear. She never moved her eyes as she went by, and as she passed they turned with a simultaneous movement, and looked after her, until they saw her at a little distance stop, and look back again, and then, with a sudden gesture, wipe her brow and neck with her coarse apron.

They looked at one another in amazement.

"What can she mean, Hubert? She looked like that when we passed her yesterday evening, and again this morning, when she was standing at a cottage door as I went by. Let us ask Mrs. Haynes if she can tell us anything about her."

Mrs. Haynes, their landlady, was, after the manner of her kind, loquacious, but not enlightening. The woman was Mrs. Green, she told them, a widow woman fairly well to do. She was a bit proud like; kept herself to herself; but, deary no, she was not mad—nobody less so. She had a brother, who was not to be called just right in his head since he lived by himself in the haunted farm; but she were all there right enough, she—

But here her flow of information was interrupted. Hubert Ferrars was a connoisseur of haunted houses. In the ideas connected with them, and often in their material aspect, he found a form of the picturesque in which he delighted, and he took up the word at once.

"The haunted farm," he said. "Where is that; and what haunts it?"

"As to what haunts it, sir, that I can't say; not believing in such stories, nor wishing to hear them. It lies about two miles out in a very lonely part; and a pretty place it must have been before it went to rack and ruin through no one living there, because of—whatever it is as is seen there. The land was sold, of course, all but the garden and a bit of wood at the back, which no one didn't want; and there old Sam lives a-minding of it, he says, though who for no one couldn't say. They do say as him and his sister—that's Mrs. Green, sir—was servants there years back; but I'm never in those parts, so to speak, and can't tell for certain."

"Is the place in ruins? Can one get in?"

"Nor no, sir; not to say in ruins. It's whole enough; only deserted like. But it's Mrs. Green as could tell you all about it, sir, only she don't always care to be questioned. They do say as she have seen—what there is to be seen—times and again; and as for getting in, you could mention it to her, and maybe she'd see Sam about it. He's a bit crusty, sir, old Sam is."

Mrs. Ferrars had turned away. Haunted houses had no attraction for her; she was "too practical," she said. But she was very curious about the woman who had looked so strangely at her, and she now said:

"Let us do that, Hubert. You would like to see the house, and I should like to see Mrs. Green. Shall we go now. It is not too late, is it, Mrs. Haynes?"

So Mr. Ferrars took up his hat again, and they walked down the street, pursued by Mrs. Haynes's voluble directions, to the little cottage which she pointed out.

The knock was answered immediately by the woman who had passed up the street a little while before; and as her eyes fell on Mrs. Ferrars's face, the same expression sprang into them again. She turned them away, however, at once, and kept them fixed on the ground by an obvious effort, while Hubert Ferrars, coming straight to the point, said, pleasantly:

"Good evening. Mrs. Green, I believe? Mrs. Haynes, our landlady, has been telling us about a haunted house in this neighbourhood; and, as I was anxious to hear more of it, and if possible to see it, she referred me to you. I shall be so much obliged if you can help me in the matter."

She looked up as he finished, hesitated a moment; then, with another furtive glance at Mrs. Ferrars, she said: "Will you please to walk in, sir?" They followed her into the little room, Hubert Ferrars apologising for troubling her in his gentle, courteous way, and she said: "Would you be pleased to tell me why you want to hear about 'The Glen,' sir?" Her manner was quite respectful, but guarded and very reserved; and he answered, with a smile:

"Well, I have no special reason; but I have always a weakness for such places, and the stories attached to them, and I should be very glad to hear anything you can tell me. What is it that is seen at—'The Glen,' is it called? I am told that you can tell me from personal experience."

The woman's brown face changed colour slightly, and she stole another glance at Mrs. Ferrars before she said:

"Yes, sir; I have seen it often and often."

She spoke very quietly, and Ferrars, who had never before found himself face to face with any one who laid claim to having seen "something" with his or her own eyes, was startled.

"I beg your pardon," he said instinctively, "perhaps you would rather not tell me any more."

There was a moment's pause, and then the woman said abruptly, without looking up:

"You wanted to see the place, sir? Would you like to spend a night there? Would you like to see—it!"

With a slight exclamation of astonishment he rose and stood with his hand resting on the back of his wife's chair, and Mrs. Green went on:

"If you would like it, sir, will you go to-morrow night? My brother will be there then, and, maybe, not again for some time, and it would be lonesome for you by yourself. Will you do it, sir?"

Such a chance had seldom presented itself to Hubert Ferrars, and, recovering from his first surprise and from a certain thrill of awe that the woman's words had sent through him, he said:

"I will, indeed; and thank you. Will you arrange with your brother?"

"Yes, sir," she said, "I'll manage." She hesitated a moment, and then added: "The—the lady, sir—she won't go with you?"

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Ferrars, speaking promptly for herself. "I shall be comfortably asleep in bed. I am an unbeliever, and should see nothing."

The woman lifted her eyes, and cast at her another of those peculiar looks.

"No, ma'am," she said in a low voice, as her eyes fell again. "No; you would never see the ghost that haunts 'The Glen.'"

It seemed to Hubert Ferrars that there was something strange in the pause that followed, and he was just going to wish Mrs. Green good evening when she said, slowly:

"I—I have a picture of the place. You would, maybe, like to see it;" and, turning to a cupboard in the corner, she took from it a small water-colour sketch. She stood for a moment with it in her hand, and then, moving quickly across the room, she laid it on the table before Mrs. Ferrars, on whom she once more fixed her eyes, this time with a look of excited expectation. Hubert Ferrars was still standing by his wife's chair; his hand was on her shoulder; and, as her eyes fell on the little picture, he felt her start violently. Before he could speak, Mrs. Green said, in a tone which she was evidently controlling by a great effort, addressing herself to him, but without moving her eyes from his wife's face: "You see, sir, there is the principal door. You go in there into——"

"Into a low, wide hall, in which stands an old oak chest. There is a door on the right leading into a low oak-beamed room. The stairs are very shallow, and of polished oak, and at their head is a little room, with a casement window from which one sees a view like that first bit we saw this morning."

Mrs. Ferrars had said all this in a low, absorbed voice, as if unconscious that she was speaking aloud, and her husband had listened with a surprised smile. The faded picture—the picture of an exterior merely—showed nothing of this to him. But suddenly the subtle shock which a human being, who is feeling intensely, will communicate to others near it, passed from the woman, whose face was white and quivering with excitement, and laid its hold on the husband and wife. They looked up suddenly, and there was a silence which seemed to palpitate with

something intangible and indefinable Ferrara, though his finer organisation had felt it more keenly than his wife had done, was the first to recover himself, and break up the curious strain of the situation.

"Why, Thea," he said, "how can you tell? When have you been there? I thought——"

But she started again, and stopped him quickly.

"Yes, dear," she answered, "I know. Shall we say good evening to Mrs. Green now? We are taking up her time."

She was very pale, and there was something about her manner—an unusual excitement in the quick, rather uneven way in which she spoke that caused him to obey her almost involuntarily, and kept him silent, until they were again in their own little sitting-room.

Then he said:

"Now, Thea! What is it, dear? What does it mean?"

She had quite recovered herself, and laughed a little as she said:

"Nothing at all tragic, I assure you, dear. You have not stumbled across a hollow mystery in my past life, nor have you unearthed the skeleton of my private cupboard. It is only a rather curious coincidence. I know that house quite well, though of course I've never been there. All my life, ever since I can remember, I have dreamt of it."

"You have dreamt of it?"

"Yes, not every night, of course; but sometimes for nights together. Generally about this time of year, and always on my birthday. Oh, don't look so astonished, dear. I am so used to it, that it has ceased to seem strange to me; and though I was a little startled when I saw that picture, it is one of those odd things that can't be explained, and it is of no use to think about it. Do you really mean to go there to-morrow night?"

"Yes," he answered; "yes, I do."

SOCIETY IN ITALY FIFTY YEARS AGO.

WHEN I first visited Florence, in 1837, Tuscany was still under the rule of the Grand Duke Leopold, an amiable, easy-going Prince, who troubled himself about State affairs just as much as it was absolutely incumbent on him to do, and not an iota more. As far as was practicable, he led a very retired life, which rather

detracted from his popularity; but once or twice in the course of the winter, the leading nobles and strangers were invited to a grand ball at the Pitti Palace, and entertained in a truly regal fashion.

In those pre-railway days, when the means of locomotion were limited to post, "vetturino," or the lumbering diligences, the number of tourists was, naturally, inconsiderable; and visitors to "*la bella Firenze*" generally took up their quarters there for several months, suites of apartments in most of the old palaces being procurable at a very moderate cost. Besides these temporary sojourners, the foreign contingent included several permanent residents of distinction; such as the Countess Lipona, the widow of the "*beau sabreur*," Joachim Murat, who kept open house during the Carnival, and the ex-King of Westphalia, Jérôme Bonaparte. The latter, socially known as the Prince de Montfort, held weekly receptions in the spacious palace occupied by him; he had a strong prejudice against our countrymen, only two English families, bearers of letters of introduction from his brothers in London, being exceptionally favoured with invitations. It must be owned that these "*soirées*" were by no means exhilarating, the strictest attention to etiquette being rigorously maintained; and it was a relief, after a brief interchange of ceremonious civilities in the state apartment, to adjourn to the billiard-room, where the Marquis Torregiani, the best player in Florence, was wont to exhibit his skill to an admiring circle. Jérôme's daughter, the Princess Mathilde, then in her eighteenth year, was strikingly handsome; but the palm of loveliness was unanimously accorded to the Misses Greville—two of the most attractive specimens of English beauty I ever remember seeing.

The only Florentine noble whose one ball was annually looked forward to as the most important event of the season, was Prince Corsini—the others usually contenting themselves with receiving their friends, three times a week, in their opera box at the Pergola; many young members of ancient families, however, were constantly to be met with in general, and more especially English society. One of the most assiduous frequenters of the fashionable club, the Casino dei Nobili, was old Valabregue, the husband of the renowned Catalani; he was then a hale and active little man, who knew everybody, and whose memory was an inexhaustible trea-

sure of reminiscence and anecdote, which rendered him a most entertaining companion. His wife, whose expressive countenance still retained some faint traces of her former beauty, was rarely seen in public; but her house was always open to a small circle of friends, at whose solicitation she would occasionally seat herself at the piano, and with a voice trembling from age, but still inexpressibly touching, sing a few bars of some favourite air, invariably concluding with a verse of "God Save the Queen."

English society in Florence was, at that period, limited to some dozen families, about half of whom were permanently settled there. None of these, with the exception of a hospitable couple named Fombelle—who occupied a charming set of apartments on the Lungo l'Arno—received regularly; there was, however, no lack of impromptu dinners and carpet-dances, with now and then, by way of variety, a musical soirée, the lion of which, when he could be induced to play, was the veteran pianist, John Baptist Cramer. In all these social gatherings, of whatever nature they might be, it was an understood thing that, at a certain hour of the evening, Mr. French, junior partner of the banking firm of Plowden and French, would be asked by the hostess to sing "Love's Young Dream," which he did, very sweetly. To new-comers this "intermezzo" appeared delightful, but it became monotonous in the long run; and it was uncharitably suggested that the vocalist's repertory must be confined to this solitary specimen, for he never sang anything else. Some years later, French, in conjunction with a philanthropic colleague, having defrayed the entire cost of a much-required new road from Florence to Fiesole, he received from the Tuscan Government the title of Count—that of Baron being at the same time conferred on his coadjutor. The four last lines of a squib written in commemoration of this double promotion may not inappropriately be inserted here:

So strangers may, whenever they
The new road gaze from far on,
Say, "Half this mount has made a Count,"
The other half a Baron."

The Florentine theatres were then four in number, namely, the Pergola, where operas only were performed; the Alfieri, as its name imports, devoted to classic tragedy and drama; the Cocomero, where I had an opportunity of seeing Luigi Vestri, the best Italian comedian, in a version

of "Pauvre Jacques," a part originally created by Bouffé, and rendered familiar to English playgoers by Morris Barnett; and the Borgo Ognissanti, a popular place of entertainment, where Stenterello, a mild species of Pasquin, reigned supreme, and, in a "patois" incomprehensible to any one but a born Florentine, satirized with impunity the political events of the day. Lovers of good music, who were fortunate enough to obtain an invitation to the Casa Standish, the residence of the Poniatowski family, had a rare treat in store for them; namely, the privilege of hearing the "Elixir d'Amore" and the "Barbiere" admirably sung by the Princess Elise and her two brothers, Joseph and Charles, the former of whom, a well-known operatic composer, subsequently became a member of the French Senate under Napoleon the Third.

I must not forget to mention that the only operas produced at the Pergola during my stay were "Beatrice di Tenda" and "Lucrezia Borgia"—then a novelty; in the first of these, the heroine was personated by the popular Virginia Blasia, whose death, after a few days' illness, in the spring of 1838, cast a gloom over the city; and in the second, Moriani and Caroline Ungher—the most perfect Lucrezia I have ever heard—drew crowded houses until the close of the season.

Naples in 1839 was, what it still is, one of the most charmingly situated and dirtiest cities in Europe; and, as a writer of that day unflatteringly but truly remarked, "would have been a Paradise, were it not for the Neapolitana." The latter—I speak of the lower classes—were a lazy, thievishly-inclined race, who lived literally from hand to mouth, and never did a stroke of work when they could possibly help it. They were, moreover, marvellously adroit in the science of pocket-picking; and if an incautious stranger ventured to indulge in a stroll through the populous quarters of the city, it was a thousand to one that, on his return home, he would discover that he had been ingeniously relieved of his handkerchief, and whatever other "portable property" he might have had about him. The want of sufficient drainage, too, was a standing nuisance; and the neighbourhood of Santa Lucia was rarely, if ever, entirely free from fever. The more open parts of the town, however, such as the Chiaja and the Chiatamone, were com-

paratively salubrious; and the palaces overlooking the Villa Reale afforded ample accommodation for that class of visitors, by whom a few hundred ducats more or less disbursed for house rent, were regarded as a secondary consideration.

The season of 1839 was an exceptionally gay one; Court balls—Naples had a Court in those days—and gala nights at the San Carlo followed each other in rapid succession, alternating with a series of brilliant entertainments given by the Marchesa di Salza, better known as Lady Strachan, assisted by her pretty daughter, the Principessa San Antimo, in her magnificent palace on the Chiaja. Nor had playgoers any cause to complain; besides the San Carlo, where Donizetti personally superintended the revival of one or two of his best operas, they might choose between the Teatro del Fondo, where a company of French actors drew good houses, and the little San Carlino, the favourite resort of all who relished genuine Neapolitan humour.

Prosper Mérimée, already celebrated as the author of the "Chronique de Charles IX," paid a flying visit to Naples during the winter, and proved a valuable acquisition to the cosmopolitan society assembled there. In every projected excursion, whether to Pozzuoli and Baia, or to Sorrento and Castel-a-mare, he was always to the fore; and as in those benighted days "Murray" and "Bædeker" were not, and tourists had to depend for information on the classical Forsyth and the unreliable Mrs. Starke, the services of so obliging and accomplished a cicerone, who seemed to know everything instinctively, were constantly in requisition. Of our own compatriots temporarily located in the Neapolitan capital, two deserve a word of mention; namely, the splendidly handsome Mrs. Mountjoy Martin, who bore away the palm of beauty from all her rivals, native and foreign; and the witty General Sir William Keir Grant, one of the most amusing "raconteurs" of his day. He had lost an arm in a duel, and was once greatly embarrassed on being asked by a Royal personage in what engagement he had met with so regrettable a misfortune. No one, however, ventured to enquire what had been his answer; for he was not a man to be trifled with, and would probably, like Mr. Pyke, have had his questioner "out before dinner-time."

On Boxing Day, 1839, in almost May weather, a cricket match organised by

some adventurous ex-Etonians took place on the Campo Marzio above the city, the sides being Eton against "the World." The school team, for want of better players, was partly made up of incapables—of whom I was one—who had never achieved much glory in the "playing-fields" at home; but in spite of this drawback, and thanks to the presence of Wilkinson, the chronicler of "Eton in Keate's Time," and Yonge, two tremendous athletes, formerly members of our eleven, we secured an easy victory in one innings, with over a hundred runs to spare.

Shortly before my arrival at Naples, an event occurred which created a considerable sensation in military circles: namely, the assassination of a young lieutenant—of a noble Calabrian family—by Antonio Baretta, a private in the same regiment. The fact of the murder having been committed in open day, and in one of the most frequented cafés of the city, contributed not a little to increase the public excitement, more especially as its perpetrator, beyond an expression of satisfaction on learning that his victim had expired, persisted in maintaining a stubborn silence as to the motive of the deed. On the night preceding his trial, however, he delivered a sealed packet to his confessor, stipulating that its contents should not be divulged until six months after his execution; which, he being convicted on the clearest evidence, and offering no defence, took place almost immediately, behind the barracks of his regiment. On the expiration of the prescribed interval, the packet was opened, and a manuscript discovered, evidently written under the influence of delirium, and containing a narrative which, if true, as there was little reason to doubt, tended in the eyes of many to palliate, if not altogether excuse, what had hitherto been regarded as a totally unprovoked and indefensible crime.

It appeared that the soldier, previous to his enlistment, had been betrothed to a young girl of great personal attractions, who, during the absence of her lover on a journey to Rome and Venice, had listened to the persuasions of the lieutenant, whose acquaintance she had casually made, and finally eloped with him from her father's house. Deserted by him a few weeks after, she returned home, and died of a broken heart; while her betrayer, who had rejoined his regiment in the capital, was engaged in paying his addresses to a wealthy Sicilian heiress, whose hand and

fortune, according to common report, he had every chance of obtaining. Meanwhile Antonio, who in his wanderings from place to place had heard nothing of what had occurred, arrived at his native village; and there, for the first time, learnt the sad tidings that awaited him. From that moment he had but one object in life—revenge; and determined that it should be complete. Taking a sorrowful leave of the childless father, he at once repaired to Naples; and a fortnight later was enrolled as a recruit in the regiment to which his enemy belonged, biding his time until an opportunity should present itself of carrying his project into execution. Little by little he contrived to render himself useful to the man he loathed, and was occasionally employed as the bearer of letters and messages to the latter's intended bride, to whom, when he judged that the fitting moment had arrived, he confided the story of her lover's infamy, and so entirely convinced her of the truth of the accusation, that on her suitor's next visit he was curtly dismissed, and forbidden to show his face before her again. Furious at this unexpected reception, and totally unaware of the cause, the lieutenant betook himself to a private room in a *café* of the *Strada Toledo*, brooding over his rejection, and striving in vain to penetrate its motive. There Antonio found him. What passed between them, although not described by the narrator, may be easily imagined, the manuscript concluding with the following words:

"My mission is accomplished; I have avenged the wrongs of the only woman I ever loved, and die gladly, for what would life be to me without her!"

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirring," etc. etc.

CHAPTER IV.

DUMPHIE stands, still silent, by the mantel, leaning his arm upon it to steady himself. He is struck to the heart by the change in the man before him. In the blaze of the morning sunshine the work done by a night of vigil and pain shows cruelly. It almost seems as though the temples, just where the hair has grown to be a little worn and grey, are more hollow than when Dumphie last saw them; and the clear, bright eyes

have taken a misty look most pitiful to meet and see.

"How is it you are here?" says Louis Draycott at last. Then, with a long, heavy sigh, he adds:

"Do you know?"

"Yes, I know."

"Who told you?"

"Bessy came last night. I should have come to you at once, but I could not get in. I have been waiting outside the gate this hour."

Dumphie gives one quick look at the white face that lies back against the chair, and steps towards the bell.

"Forgive me for taking the law into my own hands in another man's room," he says, as he rings a sharp peal; "but the first thing to be done is for you to have some strong coffee and some food. You are worn out."

"Something rather like it, I fancy," returns the other, closing his eyes a moment, and passing his hand across his forehead.

No woman could have been more tender over him than Dumphie. He stands over him, constraining him to eat and drink; watches to see some faint tinge of colour steal into the pale lips and cheek, some light into the sunken eyes.

All this time there is silence, or something nearly approaching to it, between the two men.

It is Dumphie who speaks first of the subject that absorbs the thoughts of both.

"Was it this—was it about this woman you wanted to tell me, Louis?—this woman whom you believed to be dead?"

"Yes."

"I guessed so, when Bessy came; and now there is so much I long to say, so much that must be said, words come haltingly. Help me, like the brave fellow you are, as far as in you lies. Tell me what you can——"

"Let me tell it you my own way, and then—I can tell you—all. I am a restless fellow naturally, you know, Dumphie, and can speak better like this."

He rises, pushes back the dark hair from his brow, and begins to walk slowly and steadily from end to end of the room.

Dumphie takes a place by the table, resting his elbow there and shading his eyes with his hand.

"This woman, of whom they have told you, is—what she claims to be—my wife. Three years ago I was told of her death; and I believed the tale. Maybe—

Heaven alone knows—I was too glad to hear it to sift it over-deeply. Maybe—I dare not say it was not so—it seemed the more likely to me since it freed my life from a horrible bond, and chimed in with my will."

"You had suffered!" says Dumphie softly.

"Not only through myself—but through my office. That I should be dragged down seemed a small thing beside the dread that the cause I served should suffer. My work lay in a crowded town, in the Black Country, among the poorest and the most degraded. My heart was theirs; my arms felt strong to lift them. I had the power to win them. My hopes were high, my days full of interests that never flagged. Then came this blight upon my life. I am not the first man who has found his cross too heavy; who has borne it ill; who has failed——"

"How did you fail? Tell me."

"I let her go. Our life together had become unbearable. My work was hindered, my grasp upon my people slackened. Once she came helplessly drunk to church; and I saw men jeer and laugh at the man who set himself to save others, yet could not control his own wife. I was mad that night, I think. My own helplessness against her cunning seemed a burden too heavy to be borne. I wandered miles and miles along the desolate Black Country roads. I cried to the Heaven that seemed deaf to all my prayers. When I reached my home and saw her lying in her sodden sleep, I knew what it was for a man to have murder in his heart. When I had beaten down this mad impulse, such a sense of loathing came upon me that it seemed as if any fate—no matter what—that should separate me from the woman who cursed my life, would be welcome; even death itself——"

He stands by the window a moment, and the sunlight falls upon his noble, stricken face.

Dumphie, looking up, cannot repress a groan at sight of the ruin which the man's own sorrow, and another's sin, have wrought.

In an instant, Louis Draycott is by his side.

"You are so good—so good to me," he says; and the voice that has told that bitter story all unflinching, trembles at the touch of sympathy. "I longed for you to be near me in the night, that I have watched through—I know not how—alone."

"I wish—I wish I could have come," replies the other.

Then he shakes himself together, and, taking his courage by both hands, puts a question.

"Tell me," he says, "how did this—marriage come about?"

For the life of him he cannot help hesitating a moment before he brings out the word "marriage." He is half afraid that Louis may not like the question to be put; and yet it is best he should know. It is best he should be armed at all points, and so be ready to guide, and help, and comfort.

"Looking back now, it is hard to me to say how it came about. She, my wife, was the sister of my first Rector. She led a lonely sort of life, and I tried to be kind to her. Any deeper thought of her was far enough from me, Heaven knows. I never loved her, then, or at any future time—not, that is, as a man should love the woman he marries. I was sorry for her. Her brother, I soon found out to be one of the Church's hard bargains—a bad, dissolute man. And he was unkind to her."

"In a word, you fell into a trap?"

"It may be so. At all events, I earnestly believed myself to be right in what I did. I—saw no other way."

"The woman told you, or let you see that she—loved you?"

Again comes the little hesitation in Dumphie's voice.

"She sent for me, after we had known each other some time, and I had tried to help her in any way I could. She told me that in the lonely, isolated life she led, I had stood for all the brightness that had been so long lacking. She asked me if it was only her fancy, or, if I had really been changed to her of late—colder, less interested in her troubles and trials. She came close up to me, her face deathly pale, her hands twisting nervously the one in the other, and then, all at once she broke out into a passion and torrent of tears. The Rector, coming in at the moment, and taking in, as he thought, the state of matters at a glance, grasped me by the hand and told me——"

"Yes, yes," says Dumphie, impatiently, with a restless shake peculiar to him when irritated, "I understand. It is all plain enough to me now."

There is a little silence after this.

Then, once again, Louis Draycott begins to pace the room. Once again, in low, even tones, that tell of resolute self-re-

pression, he continues the story of the past.

"I had some warning, but it fell on deaf ears. There was an old servant who had lived in the Rector's family for years. She met me one day in the garden. 'Is it true, sir,' she said, 'that you are going to marry Miss Rebecca?' I said, 'Yes; it was quite true, and our marriage day was fixed upon.' For all answer she turned aside, wringing her hands, and crying out that it was 'no doing of hers—no doing of hers,' and so left me. 'Jealous,' I thought to myself, with a smile; 'it is often the way with old servants.' I told Rebecca all the truth: how I had known but little of women, and surely never loved one woman, so that the world held for me no other. I told her that I could make no protestation of passionate devotion; was conscious of none; but that I would try and brighten her life; strive to cherish and protect her, and stand between her and sorrow. She said she was quite content; that to get away from her home troubles would be heaven to her. Shortly after this we were married, and left for the new curacy in the Black Country, which I had by this time been fortunate enough to get. I knew the man I was going to work under. I knew myself—or thought I did—and was full of hope that my work would fill my own heart and life and help the lives of others——"

He stops a moment, drawing a long, deep breath.

"Do not tell me any more," cries Dumphie, sorely troubled; "I do not want to know any more. You have told me enough—more than enough."

"Nay; let me go on. It is only right and just to—others—that you should know all: how I suffered, how I failed. There were kindly people in the busy, crowded town where we had made our home, and many were ardent to show me and my wife all possible kindness. But, as time went on, there seemed something strange about it all. Kind, good women called upon my wife; at first were cordial; but I noticed that none of those little intimacies grew up between them, none of those pleasant friendships between woman and woman that are such bright spots in many a life. And more than once people were odd in their ways to me: pitied me—or I fancied so. It gave me grave concern to see my wife's health so fluctuating. I had thought to find in her a fellow-worker, a friend, companion, help-

meet; but in all this she failed me. At last she became so ill and restless that I called in a doctor—much against her will. After he had seen her he came to my study. When he left me I knew what was the blight that lay upon my life and work. For a time I tried, resolutely, to stand against it all—to do my best for her—to watch her—to guard her from herself; but she outwitted me—she degraded me in the eyes of my people and in my own. My good resolves vanished—my heart slackened and fainted within me. Then came a day when my Rector, a man whom I had grown to love and revere almost as a father, sent for me, and with the deepest tenderness, the kindest sorrow, told me that things could not go on as they were—the scandal was too great. I must go. . . .

"I was desperate that day, and let my wife see into some of the black depths of bitterness and hatred that had gathered in my erring heart.

"'Let me go,' she cried, defying my reproaches; 'you hate me, and I hate your spying on me—your eternal watch—your 'care,' as you call it—— Let me go!'

"In the end she went. That I struggled against the fierceness of the temptation to let her drift from my life, I would fain hope and believe; that the temptation overcame me at last, we know. I made all arrangements for Rebecca's comfort. We had separate means of our own. There was no difficulty about that. The old servant, of whom I told you before, went with her, and they settled in a village in Normandy; for nothing would induce my wife to remain what she called 'within reach' of me. Her brother, then under sentence of suspension for his evil life, wrote me an outspoken, indignant letter, in which he compared me to a serpent who had stolen into the 'sanctuary of a happy home,' and was kind enough to lay the weight of all his own shortcomings and misfortunes upon my shoulders.

"When, a year later, the news of my wife's death reached me, the sense of freedom was at first all I was conscious of; but, as time went on, I saw things in a truer light. I saw how terribly I had failed. I threw myself into hard work here. I spared myself in nothing. I thought to expiate the failure of the past by the incessant toil of the present. My time here has been a happy one. I have felt that my work among the sinful and the weary has been blest. I have tried to

feel that in that blessing has lain God's pardon for the past : . .

"Thus I lived on ; and then the strain slackened. I believed myself free. I worked harder, more heartfully. I grew more tender and more loving to the sad ones around me. The old regret never died out—how should it ?—but the light-heartedness came back to me. This new life has often seemed to me, looking back, as but the forerunner of these last months of hope and happiness—these precious days that have been mine since first I knew you and Aunt Dacie ; since first I realised, and more than realised, all my highest ideal of what is possible to womanhood. I have often felt, when my content has been the deepest—how ill I, Louis Draycott, deserved such gifts of Heaven—always felt that I was, in some sort, unworthy, since I had failed—failed in the past . . ."

"You deal too hardly with yourself," says Dumphie, "far too hardly." Then, reading between the lines clearly enough to see that this aspect of the question is best left alone for ever, he hurries on.

"What can have been this woman's motive in leading you to believe in her own death ?"

"She told me that last night : she said she wanted to feel rid of me for ever. From the first she planned and plotted to make this an easy thing, by changing names and identity with her companion——"

"Who died ?"

"Yes ; and was buried in the little Protestant graveyard——"

"What then brought—your wife—to England ?"

"Left alone, she—drifted—fell into bad ways—— Ah, dear Heaven ! is this burden on my soul, too ! I—who might have held her back—let her go."

Hitherto, there is one subject that has never been touched upon by either of the two men. Of course, Dumphie is the one to take the difficult step.

"Now—we must think of Mazie."

"Think of her !"

"Yes, yes ; I know. But what I mean is, we must speak out about her. We must resolve—we two who love her so dearly, who would shield her from all sorrow if we could. What is to be done ?"

"If we could ! How helpless am I now ! I who thought to make the girdle of my arms her shield and buckler as long as Heaven should give me life, and spare her to me !"

Again that restless pacing to and fro, that long-drawn sigh that seems like to rend the breast where sorrow sits enthroned.

Dumphie watches the other keenly. He has that to tell which shall rend in the telling, yet which must hold some balm of healing, some small speck of comfort.

"You will see her—to-day !"

Louis Draycott stops short in his restless walk ; stands by the writing-desk, and leans his hand heavily—for his head reeks—upon the page of the open diary lying there.

"Yes—but—how to tell her !"

"She knows already."

"You told her ! You !"

"Yea. I thought I could at all events spare you that pain."

The man before him is gasping now. He might have been running a race in which every nerve and sinew had been tried to the uttermost. His face is white, his eyes wild and staring.

"Tell me," he sobs out, "tell me—how did she bear it ?"

"At first I thought I had killed her. She lay as one dead and lifeless in my arms. But—as I kissed her, as my tears fell upon her face—she lifted her head from my breast ; she clung about my neck. 'Go to him,' she cried ; 'go to him and tell him that I know—tell him that this may part our lives—his and mine—not our hearts—not our hearts . . .'"

A man upon his knees weeping like a woman ; a man's tears—those terrible, burning drops wrung forth only by extremity of pain—a man's agonised sobs, mocking the brightness of the sunshine that falls upon his bowed, dark head !

Can Dumphie ever forget !

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BROWNIE'S PLOT.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "Lucy Carter."

CHAPTER V. REMORSE.

IN spite of Anderson's warnings and the entreaties of his wife, Mr. Northcott would not rest until a message had been sent to Mr. Vaile, the solicitor. Before he slept that night he signed a codicil to his will.

Having disinherited Clement, the patient became more restful, although his condition was still so critical that no one was allowed in his room except Mrs. Northcott and Maud. But by Friday he had become so much worse that the Rector was summoned to his bedside.

It was a point in Clement's favour that he stood in such high favour with Mr. and Mrs. Butterworth at the Rectory; and, whether it was for Clement's temporal or his father's spiritual welfare, or both, Mr. Butterworth at once set to work to procure a reversal of recent events—a reversal, not of Mr. Northcott's opinion concerning his son, but of the sentence which he had so hastily pronounced and executed.

Clement had taken up his quarters at the "Black Bull" Hotel, near the Railway Station. Every morning and evening he called to enquire after his father; but, although on more than one occasion he saw Mrs. Northcott and the girls, he never condescended to exchange more than a few formal words concerning the immediate object of his visit.

On Saturday evening he was alone in his sitting-room at the "Black Bull," when there came a tap at the door, and to his surprise and consternation, Brownie stood before him.

He was on his feet in an instant.

"What is it?" he asked, with his face as white as the cloth which was laid ready for dinner.

"You are to come at once," she cried; "do not lose a minute. The carriage is waiting. Come, Clement, or it will be too late."

Snatching up his hat he followed her silently downstairs, and in a few moments they were on the way to Eastwood as fast as a pair of horses could take them.

"Does the pater know you have come, Brownie?" asked Clement, anxiously; "did he send for me himself?"

"Yes, yes. Mr. Butterworth persuaded him—Mr. Butterworth and Mr. Vaile. Oh, I pray we may not be too late. Mr. Anderson would let nobody see him until yesterday. Not even me. Henry Grayson is there, too; he has bidden him—bidden him good-bye. Why do they not go faster? Oh, I pray we may be in time!"

Perhaps Clement was engaged in a similar manner, for no other word passed his lips until the carriage stopped before the door of Eastwood. The house seemed strangely silent; even the gas burned dim; and Clement dared not speak above a whisper. Scarcely heeding what he did, he entered the dining-room, whilst Brownie ran upstairs to announce his arrival.

The room was in semi-darkness; but he could just discern two figures by the window. Mr. Vaile, a tall, white-headed, white-whiskered man, whose jovial face seemed out of place at such a time, came forward and pressed his hand.

"Am I in time?" gasped Clement, possessed by only one idea.

"Let us hope so."

Henry Grayson merely nodded; the two had never been very good friends.

Brownie's careworn face appeared at the door, and, without waiting for any second bidding, Clement hastened to his father's room. Before he could touch its handle, the door was opened by Mr. Butterworth, who detained him for a moment on the threshold, as though it were unseemly to enter the chamber in such haste.

Startled by the Rector's grave face, he became a prey to the worst fears. Anderson had his hand on the sick man's wrist, Maud was on her knees by the foot of the bed, Mrs. Northcott stood gazing at her husband's face, perfectly oblivious of the tears which stained her own.

Fresh in Clement's memory was the last interview between himself and his father, in that very room. Mr. Northcott's words rankled in his mind; he would have forfeited his life on the spot, if he might only be in time to listen to others less reproachful. Mr. Butterworth led him towards the bed, but before Clement reached it, Anderson slowly rose.

"It's all over," he quietly said; and to Clement the words sounded like his own death-knell.

During the last few days, the whole of his past life had seemed to be mapped out before him in all its monotony of aimless frivolity. He would not admit even the excuse of youth, but condemned himself utterly. His one hope had been to hear withdrawn the curse which had been hurled at him by his father; and now he knew that his hope was vain. He, who alone might have condoned his offences, was silenced for ever.

Clement's agony was terrible to witness. Carried beyond the consciousness of the presence of spectators, he threw himself on the bed, and lost all restraint.

"I have killed him! I have killed my father!" he cried. "But for me he would still be here."

Hearing these words, Maud was overcome by dismay; her brother stood before her self-convicted. Mrs. Northcott heard them also, and her deep grief for her husband was marred by deeper anger towards his son.

Mr. Butterworth led Clement sadly from the room, and then he left the house, telling himself bitterly that he left no friend behind him.

Shortly afterwards, he was followed from the door by the Rector, Mr. Vaile, and Henry Grayson. Grayson was a slightly-built man of five-and-thirty; of average height, and every-day appearance.

He was scarcely what you would call handsome; yet, with his carefully-cut brown beard, and his regular features, he would have been sufficiently presentable had he not so entirely lacked distinction. You saw at a glance that he might be implicitly trusted, yet you would never be tempted to open your heart to him.

"So you think the boy is guilty," said Mr. Vaile, after listening to Mr. Butterworth's account of Clement's behaviour at his father's death-bed.

"I wish I were able to think otherwise," was the answer.

"There can be only one opinion," said Grayson, quickly. "The forgery was committed by one of two persons: Litton, or Clement Northcott. Litton could not have done it, that was a physical impossibility. Therefore, it must have been Clement. Considering his previous record, I cannot understand that there is the least room for surprise."

"What about Mr. Litton's previous record?" asked Mr. Vaile.

"Nobody knows. During the past twenty years he has been only once in England. He left before he was five-and-twenty. But what does that matter? It is impossible that Mr. Litton could have been concerned in this affair; perfectly impossible."

"Not at all impossible," said Mr. Vaile.

"Eh, what's that?" exclaimed the Rector, raising his shaggy red eyebrows. "What's that, Vaile?"

"It may have been impossible for Mr. Litton actually to have forged poor Northcott's signature; but it is by no means impossible that some one else may have forged it for him. My own private opinion is that Clement is guilty. I am sorry; but that is my opinion. But when you talk of possibilities, it is a horse of quite another colour. I don't say that I think Mr. Litton had a confederate; I merely say it is not impossible. The whole business may have been arranged before he arrived at Middleton, and this accident may have been a kind of providential interference in his favour—from his point of view, you know. For that matter, his arm may not be broken at all."

"Then," said Grayson, "Anderson must be an idiot; a perfect fool."

"Fool enough to be mistaken. We are all fools, you know, the thirty millions of us. Well, well, of course, that is a wild suggestion; still, to my mind, it would have been more satisfactory if every bandage

had been stripped from Mr. Litton's arm before them all. To do him justice, he was quite willing. I have made a point of asking Anderson; and I find that, since he first strapped it up, the bandages have not been all removed. Don't think that I say the arm has not been broken, Grayson. I only want to show you that, after all, nothing has been definitely proved. People do win bets sometimes, you know. Take my advice; try to keep an open mind for the present."

"I suppose," said Grayson, after a pause, "that it is you I have to thank for the duty which has just been imposed upon me."

"I think the Rector is as much to blame as I am," answered Mr. Vaile with a chuckle, as he looked at the bowed figure shuffling along by his side.

"What arrangement did you arrive at after all?" asked Mr. Butterworth, straightening himself as usual, as he spoke.

"Thanks to you and Mr. Vaile," said Henry Grayson, "Mr. Northcott's hope that his son might prove innocent grew stronger as his intellect grew weaker. I was required to pledge my word that, if Clement should succeed in proving his innocence within six months of his father's death, I would make him my partner at the works."

"That is to say," explained Mr. Vaile, "that you would make over to Clement a portion of the share belonging to the widow."

"Oh, I am not called upon to make any direct pecuniary sacrifice—I am aware of that. But imagine Clement Northcott for one's partner! I am unable to make head or tail of Mr. Northcott's motive. Not a word was said as to the amount of the share."

"You will understand his motive better when you have heard the contents of the will," answered Mr. Vaile; and by this time they had reached the old-fashioned Rectory.

"Henry," said Mr. Butterworth, as he shook the younger man's hand, "our friend has placed in you a confidence as great as any that could be placed in man. He has trusted his son's future to your honour. Clement's welfare may depend upon your simple word."

"It is not very likely I shall be called upon to speak that word," was the answer; and, judging from Grayson's tone, it was difficult to avoid the impression that he hoped it might turn out as he had said.

CHAPTER VI. AFTER THE FUNERAL.

THE days immediately following his father's death passed wearily for Clement. His belongings were transferred from Eastwood to the "Black Bull," and he did not go near the house until Friday, the day of the funeral.

It was not that he willingly severed himself from those who were near and still dear to him. But the events of the past week formed an insurmountable obstacle between himself and those who so deeply blamed him, and he only waited to pay the last mark of respect to his father before leaving Middleton for ever.

If that Friday was not suited to the mournful occasion, it was certainly ill-suited to any other. A mass of clouds hung over the town like a pall; the rain fell in straight, thick lines, and yet was powerless to relieve the oppression of the atmosphere.

Standing in the wet, clayey soil by the open grave—the air faint from the sickly odour of the flowers which had been sent in such numbers—Clement tried hard to let his thoughts dwell only upon his father and Heaven.

But by his side stood Henry Grayson; behind him, Mr. Litton. The one he had never loved, the other he hated. He could guess at the thoughts now passing through Grayson's mind, and they disturbed his own. Every surrounding object seemed to drive him back upon himself; whilst to-day, for the first time in his life, he was filled with a deep yearning for the sympathy of others.

This may have been due to a natural reaction from the desolation of his recent self-reproaches; it may have been the effect of the solemn service to which he had just listened; but he longed for help and sympathy to-day, just as heartily as he would have spurned it yesterday.

The men from the Works crowded round the grave; the coffin was lowered: "Ashes to ashes; dust to dust."

It was all over. Mr. Butterworth's surplice hung wet and limp about him; the flowers were turning yellow in the rain. Clement left the grave, almost wishing he might change places with its tenant.

The blinds were drawn up in the dining-room at Eastwood; but the dim daylight entered like an intruder. Everybody moved about with unnatural, obtrusive quietness. Mr. Litton indulged in common-

places upon death in general, and upon that of "poor Northcott" in particular.

Clement kept as far as possible from the rest; Maud sat next to Mrs. Northcott, whilst Brownie had taken her place on a low seat behind her aunt's chair, where she was partly hidden from most of those present, and entirely from Clement. Mr. Butterworth and Mr. Vaile, who appeared in an official capacity, completed the small and sorrowful group.

Brownie, from her secluded seat, was able to command a full view of Clement; and from the moment when Mr. Vaile began to read the will, until he reached its last word, she did not once remove her eyes from his face.

We need not attempt to follow Mr. Vaile through all the ramifications of this document. After numerous minor legacies, the sum of five thousand pounds was bequeathed to Margaret Guy Northcott, for her sole use and benefit for ever; payable upon her twenty-first birthday.

To Maud Litton Northcott were left twenty thousand pounds, without reserve or stipulation.

With one particular exception, everything else of which the testator had died possessed, including his interest in the Brick Works, passed to the widow.

Thus far, Clement's name had not been mentioned; but so great was the tumult of his mind that he failed to realise all that the omission portended. But Mr. Vaile was now approaching the clause which bore immediate reference to the son of the house.

The sum of fifty thousand pounds was left to Mr. Vaile and Mr. Butterworth, jointly, and in trust. At the expiration of six calendar months from the date of Mr. Northcott's death, this sum was to be handed by them to Clement; always provided that within this period he had become a partner in the firm known as the "High Wood Brick and Tile Company." If, at the end of six months from the seventh of June—the day upon which Mr. Northcott breathed his last—Clement was not Henry Grayson's partner, the fifty thousand pounds were to be otherwise disposed of, in a manner provided for in the will.

The affair had been difficult to arrange; it seemed absolutely necessary to place a great trust in the hands of some one individual; and in selecting Henry Grayson for the purpose, Mr. Northcott could hardly have paid his partner a higher compliment,

on the one hand; nor have brought home to Clement the cruel indignity of his position more thoroughly, on the other.

The partnership was then merely a test. Clement Northcott's fortune depended absolutely and entirely upon Grayson's being convinced of his innocence—for no one could doubt Henry's good faith—and the evidence which might convince him had yet to be produced.

Clement had taken it for granted that, whatever might betide, his would always be an ample share of this world's gear. Yet now that he was practically cut off without so much as the proverbial shilling to sweeten the process, his first thought was the consoling one that, at the end, his father had experienced at least a slight reaction in his favour.

Mr. Vaile's voice died away; everybody waited awkwardly for some one else to move. To Clement the room was stifling; the ceiling seemed to be pressing on his cranium.

"Mother," he said, addressing Mrs. Northcott by the name he had *lisp*ed when first she became the mistress of his father's house, "I am going away. But, before I leave Middleton for good, I want just one word from you. You have heard my father's last words. Nobody had so good cause to blame me as he; yet he relented towards the end, or he would not have put his name to this will. I want to hear that you also forgive me."

Old Mr. Butterworth rubbed his spectacles, as though from long habit he had come to think they were veritably his eyes; Mr. Vaile's genial face grew cloudy; even Mr. Litton had an unwonted lump in his throat.

"Clement," said Mrs. Northcott, her thin voice pitched high from long complaining, "you are mistaken. You never did understand your father. He *did* not alter his opinion, but his mind was weak, and he allowed himself to be over-persuaded. I wish I could forgive you. The best thing you can do is to go away. The sooner you leave Middleton the sooner our disgrace will be forgotten."

As Brownie listened, she felt as though she had been struck by a sudden blast of freezing wind. Clement turned gloomily towards his sister.

"Good-bye, Maud—unless you too would rather not waste a thought upon me."

"No, no, Clement," she cried, clapping his hand with both her own.

He had not intended to say more, but her warmth set loose his pent-up emotion.

"Tell me, Maud," he cried, impulsively—for it seemed terribly desolate to go away without one word of sympathy—"tell me that you don't believe that man's lie," and he glared at Mr. Litton.

But Maud could not give the assurance he asked for. She had weighed the matter carefully; she recollected her brother's desire to be alone on that Thursday afternoon—probably the day on which the forgery was committed; she recollected the unexplained journey to the bank; and, above all, she could even now hear Clement's passionate self-reproaches by his father's deathbed. No need for her to utter a word, Clement's overwrought sensitiveness perceived her hesitation in an instant; and, possessed by keen disappointment and humiliation, he who had been ever the best and—in his careless way—the most gentle of brothers, flung her small hand roughly from him.

For a moment he looked vaguely round the room as if in search of some one else, then, turning abruptly, strode towards the door.

Brownie, nervously crouching farther out of sight than ever, had heard every word, and marked each changing expression on Clement's haggard face. Now she closed her eyes for a moment and clenched her hands so tightly that the nails hurt her flesh. Her heart beat as it had never beaten before; her face was so white as to disgrace her name. In happier days—days never to come again—Clement and Maud had often taunted her with cowardice, and perhaps loved her the better for her little timidities. But now she was undergoing an ordeal from which the bravest might have shrunk.

Having reached the door, Clement once more looked round the room with a strange air of bewilderment. Maud thought he would hurl at them some words of defiance; but only a sigh escaped his lips, as he passed his hand wearily before his hot, dry eyes.

Another moment and the door would have closed behind him.

"Clement! Clement!"

With nervous, tottering steps Brownie came from her shelter and extended her arms towards him.

The spirit was so willing, the flesh so weak! She wished to proclaim herself loudly and boldly before all her small world; but her voice would tremble, and

she was afraid the door would close on Clement before she reached it.

Turning again on the instant, he eagerly caught her cold hands in his.

"I trust you, Clement; perfectly—entirely. I know you did not do it."

It was no more than a whisper; but to him it seemed that the heavens had opened, and an angel descended for his especial benefit.

"A LOS TOROS."

A CASUAL visitor in this beautiful capital of Madrid, at a time when perhaps there is more animation and excitement than at any other season of the year—the First Day of the Bull-fights—even though he may be that exemplification of the man humane as being "merciful to his beast," cannot altogether withdraw himself from the great whirlpool of which the "Plaza de Toros," or Bull-ring, is the centre. I do not write from a long experience. I have been a spectator but three times during the many years of my journeys in Spain. I hope and believe I am not a cruel man; yet, while the brutality to "the friend of man" fills me with repugnance, horror, and loathing, there is such attraction in the display of dexterity, coolness, and undoubted courage by the actors, that I cannot resist; and while I am horrified at the cruelty, I am compelled to admire the art—for art it is. There are rules as strict, and laws as firm, in doing battle with "El Toro" as those which regulate our gentler sports; and infractions of them meet equal punishment of abuse or ridicule. As a "foul" blow is execrated in the boxing ring, so a badly delivered "estocada" or sword-thrust by the "Matador" encounters a storm of vituperation. As we laugh at a hit "across the wicket," so is ridiculed a pair of banderillas badly placed. The cruelty to the wretched screws of horses no one would think it possible to even attempt to defend; and in this the curious argument of many Spaniards of the better and even educated classes, has filled me with absolute amazement; not only from its infinite weakness, but as much from the frequency and coolness with which it is advanced. "The horses are old, valueless, fit for nothing else, and at any rate they must die soon;" this has been said to me not once, or twice, but over and over again; and, indeed, I might say almost invariably. Not the

least surprising part of the matter is that the argument is brought forward in all good faith, and that it is deemed conclusive—which with me it most certainly is.

Madrid, always animated, is, as the day approaches, absolutely in a state of fever. Little else is talked of but "Los Toros." "Have you got your ticket?" "What did you have to pay?" (for except in the case of subscriptions for a series, every seat is in the hands of speculators). "What place have you?" are questions heard on every side. The seats at their normal prices are not expensive; the highest being eleven pesetas, or nine shillings. The Puerta del Sol, which may be called the very heart of Madrid—a grand open, oval space into which the busy traffic of nine streets converges, and which is always full of life—is on this day worth a journey to see for itself alone. The ceaseless streams of all descriptions of vehicles and foot-passengers make locomotion in any form a matter of difficulty and danger; and all are making for the Calle Alcalá—that most beautiful of streets, whose equal in Europe I do not know, and at whose end is the Plaza de Toros. Innumerable omnibuses, coaches, trams, carriages, cabs are brought into use on these days at prices which on occasions less important I believe even a cabman would blush to ask. The Plaza de Toros, situated about a mile from the Puerta del Sol, is the largest and finest in Spain. All seats being filled—and they generally are—it gives accommodation to fourteen thousand people. A vast circle of firm, smooth ground, covered with a slight layer of sand, and surrounded by tier upon tier of seats.

First are the barriers, a stout fencing of wood, some six feet in height, having on their inner, or bull-ring side, a slight wooden ledge, which serves as a step to the Toreros in vaulting the barrier, to escape the rush of the bull. In most of the bull-rings in Spain the barriers are divided into sections about every thirty paces, giving an opening of some four feet, and ingress to the alley behind. Each opening is protected by an outer barrier of the same height, and leaving space between it and the main barrier through which a man may squeeze, but which is too narrow to admit the bull. The barriers protect a narrow passage, or alley, by which the bull-fighters and servants can circulate the whole of the ring. Sometimes the bull will leap the fencing; and then it is "sauve qui peut" until he is driven forth.

The seats then rise tier upon tier—some thirty rows all told, the first three or four being reserved and numbered; then ten rows unnumbered. All these are of stone, and uncovered. Behind these are the covered "boxes." At one point a specially large one, with glass sides, is reserved for Royalty, and at its side is that of the President and his friends. Exactly opposite, on the other side of the ring, and facing him, is the stand from which a regimental or municipal band discourses sweet music. Under this platform is the door through which El Toro is driven to meet his death. For some hours before this, he is kept alone in a stall of almost complete darkness, with the result that, on quitting the obscurity and silence of his cell for the glaring light and the roar of voices of the arena, his fury is at its highest.

Picture what such fury must be! Brought only the day before from the open pastures, he is suddenly immured in a cage so narrow that he cannot turn—can scarcely move. At the moment he is to be sent forth to his doom, he is further maddened by the yells and shouts of his keepers, and a small spike, of perhaps two inches in length, adorned with two long streamers of coloured ribbon, is buried in his shoulder. And then the doors are opened, and he is hurried to the open yet confined bull-ring. Imagine the intensified fury of an animal naturally fierce, under such goading as this, and you will wonder if it be possible that such ferocity and strength can be subjected by no stouter weapon than a slender sword.

Leading from the cells are passages connected with the different offices; the stables of the poor wretched screws of horses; the spacious courtyard in which the Toreros and their friends meet before the fight, and talk—a very Babel of tongues—of their battles past and to come; the little chapel in which mass is said before they go forth. The public have the privilege of entrance to these, and especially interesting it is to strangers. The talk—all professional, of course—is almost deafening; and the visitor, if he be a good fellow, and "simpatico," may freely ask any number of questions without fear of repulse; indeed, with a certainty of particularly voluble replies.

A pair of high wooden gates opens on to the road, by which the Toreros enter. Here comes in a large wagonette Don Rafael Molina, far better known as

"Lagartijo," perhaps the most famous Espada of the day. How all crowd round to look at him; how eager are those who can claim the very slightest acquaintance with him to get a shake of the hand, and ask:

"Que tal, Rafaél?" (how goes it, Rafaél?).

What a captivating dress it is—the rich velvet; the profusion of the richest gold or silver lace; the perfect-fitting flesh-coloured silk stockings; the gorgeous faja, or sash!

A great man this; and, indeed, if money make the man, well and easily he may be; for the pay of a popular Espada is almost as great as that of a popular artist—and is he not a great artist, forsooth? It may be reckoned safely that, for every corrida, these men receive from one thousand two hundred to one thousand five hundred dollars. From this he must pay his attendant Picadores, Banderilleros, and Chulos—his "cuadrilla," as they are called—but when these are paid, he puts in his own pocket at least one hundred and sixty to two hundred pounds.

The bull-fighters are divided into four classes, the chief being the Matador or Espada, whose part in the taurian games it is to deliver the death-stroke. He is armed with a straight, finely-pointed sword of ordinary rapier length, and a small red cloak. It is his duty to kill the bull by a thrust given in an exact spot between the shoulders and reaching the heart, and his part is the most difficult to play, requiring, as it does, courage, coolness, dexterity, and marvellous quickness of eye and judgement.

Following the Espada, in importance, are the two Banderilleros. They are solely provided with two thin wands, or sticks, about two feet in length and profusely decorated with ribbons, having at one end a sharp barbed point of steel, and these must be placed firmly in the shoulders of the bull as he charges past them. To me, this appears the most dangerous and difficult play of all, for they have no defending cape.

Next to them are the Picadores—generally two, and always two or three in reserve. These are mounted on the sorry steeds, which, blindfolded, and with their ears firmly plugged with tow, and utterly defenceless, are, nine times out of ten, doomed to a cruel, lingering death. Their riders, protected by ponderous padding, the right leg sheathed in iron, and with a broad-brimmed "Rancho" hat, also specially

strengthened to protect the wearers in their falls, are armed with a long and heavy lance, whose point is a sharp blade of steel some two inches in length. They act with the "Chulos," who rank next in order, and may be considered pupils in the preparatory schools of their master, the great Espada. The Chulos carry simply a cloak, and perhaps their part is the prettiest of all. Attracting the bull by waving their cloaks, he rushes wildly at them, and their wonderful dexterity and agility in avoiding his onset are exciting and interesting to a degree. Nor does it rouse one's feelings of sympathy so much with "El Toro," for let me say here that "El Toro" is no joke. Bulls for fighting are specially bred, and carefully selected; and, as certain racing stables are famous for the horses they produce, so particular herds are celebrated for their dauntless bulls.

The cost of one of these corridas may be safely reckoned at not less than one thousand five hundred pounds. There are generally six bulls killed, and these average from seventy to one hundred pounds each. Horses are contracted for, and are bought at simply "knacker" prices; sometimes as many as twenty-five are done to death. There are generally three Espadas, and these, with their cuadrillas, may be taken one with another at about two hundred and fifty pounds each. Then there is a very large number of assistants and attendants; a very heavy rent is paid for the Plaza; and the Government tax, or "contribucion," is also a considerable item. The "gate" may be estimated, given a "full house"—and it is almost always fairly filled—at some two thousand pounds. I am told that, as regards the amount a famous Espada may make, that Guerrita, a very famous Espada, though hardly more than a boy—for he is still in his twenty-fourth year—has already, at only the beginning of the season, signed engagements for sixty-four corridas, at two hundred and twenty pounds each! When it is calculated that, at the outside, his following will not take more than about seventy pounds of this, the amount that is left appears a very fair salary for a man—or, to speak more correctly, a lad, who probably had a difficulty in attaching his signature to his contracts!

Let us now suppose that we are seated in our places, well in "La Sombra"—for, even in April, the sun is powerfully hot—the President and his party are filling their box,

and while all are waiting eagerly for the procession to appear, we have time to look around. What a grand, inspiring sight it is! In the centre, the broad circle of sand, cleared now of every one; around, the expectant multitude. There is little noise now, the Babel of tongues is hushed; but what animation the wondrous colouring and thousands of faces give us! The gentler sex is numerously represented, and the effect of the better dressed, with their pretty white mantillas, and the more gorgeous colouring of the silk handkerchiefs and many-patterned shawls of the ladies of less distinction, socially, and the ever restless movement of a perfect rainbow of fans, is nothing less than wondrous, and can be seen in no other country than "sunny Spain." There is not a vacant seat; and when I say that I myself saw a "queue" of speculators—I counted seventy-four—waiting at nine o'clock at night for the opening of the ticket-office at nine o'clock the following morning, perhaps this is not surprising.

And now begins the prettiest part of all the brilliant show, and I will venture to say that nowhere else can it be seen than in Spain; and in such perfection, in no other city in Spain than in Madrid: the Procession of the Bull-fighters.

The President—a member of the Ayuntamiento, or municipal body—has taken his seat, and with his handkerchief has given the signal. The trumpets sound, and the doors opposite to him and at the side of those behind which El Toro is imprisoned, are thrown open, and headed by two mounted alguaziles, attired in cavalier dress of dark-blue velvet and plumed sombrero, the cuadrillas, or procession of bull-fighters appears.

On this occasion three of perhaps the most famous Espadas of all Spain are engaged. They are Rafael Molina, Salvador Sanchez, and Rafael Guerra, or, as they are better known, "Lagartijo," "Frascuero," and "Guerrita." Lagartijo is in dark-green and gold; Frascuero, in crimson and gold; Guerrita, in blue and silver, with mauve breeches. Each wears the gorgeous faja, or sash, of coloured silk, and, draped around in proper fashion, the richly-embroidered velvet cloak.

Behind their respective chiefs follow, in their due order, the Banderilleros and the Chulos, equally splendidly attired, and to them succeed the mounted Picadores; and behind them come the attendants of the ring and gaily-harnessed mules, whose

work it is to drag off at the gallop the carcasses of the bulls and horses.

It is an animating, exciting, pretty sight. The thousands of eager spectators vociferously applauding their favourites; the music playing a stirring march; the brilliant procession stepping in time to the music, passing across the arena; the glorious sun, and the matchless blue of the clear and heavenly sky above make up a scene that lingers long in one's memory; and it would be well if one could bear away with him only this impression.

The leading horsemen, as they reach the President, doff their plumed sombreros, salute, and wheel aside, left and right; and, as the rest of the procession approaches, the men salute; and then each hurries to the barrier to throw aside his velvet cloak of state, and change it for the less gorgeous one of war—generally crimson lined with yellow.

And now the mounted alguazil rides up again to the President, who throws to one of them the key of the prison of El Toro. He catches it in his hat, gallops across the ring, and delivers it to the officer in charge.

The barriers are all closed; the toreros stand, cloak in hand; the trumpets sound; the doors of the cage are thrown open; there is a moment's hush of eager expectancy, and then, amid a perfect roar of excitement from the thousands around him, El Toro dashes into the ring—a splendid creature, sleek and glossy black—and one notices, with admiration and fear, the tremendous power of that ponderous neck and shoulders, the perfect curve and almost needle sharpness of the horns.

With head thrown up, and snorting with rage, he looks around, and dashes at full speed across the ring to where the nearest "Chulo" stands. Wonderful is the coolness, and pretty the dexterity with which the man approaches his enemy. Holding his cape doubled in his right hand, he waits the moment of the rush, and, when escape would seem impossible to the unpractised eye, as the bull lowers his head to attack he springs lightly across, and, throwing his cloak right in the face of the infuriated creature, leaves El Toro to toss it in the air and gallop on.

At times, it is a very near thing for the man, and, with the bull pursuing him, it appears almost by an inch only that he reaches the barrier in time to spring upon the ledge and vault lightly over.

The Picadores ride up from time to

time and offer battle; and it is here that much of the value of the bull's courage and breeding is estimated. If he face the horseman—and he generally does—and boldly charge him, he is "Valiente," and does honour to his race; but if he turn tail and walk away, he is "un bucy" (an ox), and is greeted with a storm of hisses, groans, and whistling. Yet if he be valiant—ah, what a cruel, brutal sight it is!—for the Picador, half facing the bull, and holding his lance at the charge, awaits the rush; and Toro, after angrily pawing the ground, and his tail waving with fury, pauses, and then, with all his fearful power, dashes on. Horse and rider are literally lifted in the air and hurled with terrific force to the ground; and it is seldom that the horse escapes a frightful gash from the sharp and deadly horn which has impaled him. The Chulos hurry up, and with their cloaks draw the bull away from his prostrate foe, or it would be certain and violent death to both horse and rider.

The attendants lift the Picador to his feet—for he is too heavily padded to rise alone—and it is almost incredible that from such a headlong fall and fearful shock a man can recover himself sufficiently to remount; yet it is seldom a Picador is injured. If the horse can but just stand he is beaten to his feet; and the Picador remounting and again taking his lance, hurries as fast as his wretched horse can be spurred and hammered to attack again.

I have travelled much in this beautiful country; there is not a capital or town of importance that I have not seen and stayed in. I have invariably received the utmost kindness, the heartiest hospitality, sympathy and care in illness, courtesy always, friendship often; and amongst the poorest and least educated have ever noticed a politeness and gentleness of manner worthy of the noble people of whose race they are. And thinking of all their goodly, kindly attributes, I marvel at the thoughtlessness which will let such barbarity be sanctioned by the authority, license, and presence in propria persona, of their very Government.

Until a horse cannot really stand, he is spurred and beaten forward; with blood streaming from the cruel gashes in his sides, shoulders, and haunches, he is spurred and beaten on. "Ah! the pity of it." Enough of this. The President signals; again the trumpets sound for the Picadores to leave the ring, and the Banderilleros to take their turn. There are

two to each bull, and each carries a pair of the gaily-decorated darts. It is a hazardous, difficult duty this. The Chulo has his cloak, the Picador is mounted, the Espada has his muleta, or little scarlet cloak; but the Banderillero is without protection, for his dart is but a reed against the force and thick hide of the bull. Yet it is his part, when the bull is as wild as on his first entry, to approach the infuriated creature; to meet him in his rush, and lightly springing aside, to deftly place his two banderillas firmly in the shoulders of the bull. It is thrillingly exciting. Well placed, the darts remain in the flesh of the bull, and, being barbed, not all the plunging and shaking he can give will dislodge them. This is called "a good pair." Frequently, however, the Banderillero slightly misses his aim, and places them badly, and is greeted with shouts of ridicule; or lacks force in his stroke, and Toro shakes them off. Whilst a fresh pair is handed to him by his attendant, his companion takes his turn, and when both have delivered their two pairs, the President again signs for the trumpets to sound, and, at the signal, the Espada, who, with his sword—a straight, firm, but well-tempered, keenly-pointed rapier, with a curiously-small red handle, and cross-guard—and a small scarlet cape, attached to a short stick, by which he holds it, has been waiting the call, approaches the President, and, bowing to him, makes the "Brindis," or short address, as a rule to the effect that he will "Do or die;" and then, facing round, walks leisurely towards the bull, closely attended by one or two of his followers, who, if their chief be in special danger, will draw the bull away by a flourish of their cloaks.

As may be imagined from the large sums of money they command, really famous Espadas are few and far between; added to a probably natural gift, they have attained their position by a training that is both dangerous and severe, passing through the grades of Chulo and Banderillero, after an apprenticeship in the still more modest rank and file; and although there are but few towns of any importance in the Peninsula without a Plaza de Toros, the number of notable Espadas may be counted on one's fingers; and one who is fighting in Madrid to-day, may be engaged in some very distant town to-morrow.

Holding his sword in his right hand, and with his cape gathered together in the left,

he approaches to almost touching distance of the bull; and then, letting the cape fall full in front of him, awaits the rush. It is impossible to one not learned in the art to say more than that with a variety of passes of the cloak—each pass having a descriptive name—he will confidently stand so close that one wonders at his escape from the frequent rushes; yet with a single step, and with the bull almost brushing him as he passes, he will spring on one side, and merely changing hands, await the next rush from the opposite direction. It is this wonderful command and coolness, cleverness and dexterity, that draw round after round of applause; and each pass is rewarded according to its merit. Having thus “played” for some few minutes, he prepares to give the finishing stroke; and it is for this that the utmost dexterity and precision are demanded. The thrust must be given on an exact spot; and to deliver it outside a circle no larger than a crown piece might cover, of which it is the centre, is ruinous to reputation, and certain of shouts of disapproval and ridicule. By the play of his cape he at last gets the doomed animal in the proper position to receive the blow—the head down and leaving the shoulders clear—and then the Espada standing at right angles to the bull, and with his sword raised across his body, and pointing in a line from his eye to the spot for which he aims, delivers with terrible force a thrust which, if well given, pierces to the very heart; and springing on one side as the bull rushes forward at the cloak held down before his eyes, he leaves the weapon buried so deeply in the body that it reaches to the very hilt; and the hand of the Matador is wet with the blood of his now dying foe. When the thrust is so given, the applause is positively delirious. The bull stands dazed, as it were, wavers, staggers, and at length falls heavily to the ground—dead. The Matador draws his sword from the carcase, and walks leisurely towards the President, to whom he bows the first of all. The shouting and cheering are absolutely deafening; and as he walks slowly round the Plaza acknowledging it, hats, cigars, cigarettes, and often more valuable offerings, are thrown to him. The hats he picks up, or his attendants pick them up and hand them to him to throw back to their owners. I saw one man last year in this same Plaza throw first his hat; then he took off his coat and threw that; and then, yelling and shouting all the time, he took off his

boots and threw them into the ring! I was told that at a corrida last year so many cigars and cigarettes were thrown to Lagartijo, that they had to bring a hand-cart into the ring to carry them off. Such a scene of mad excitement can surely nowhere else be seen; and but for the barbarous cruelty to the horses, which no words can too severely condemn, it is a sight such as a stranger might well go far to witness. If it be said that in like manner it is cruel to the bull, I say I see no more brutality in it than the more lengthened, though less bloody, torture of the fox, the hare, the stag, in our own hunting-fields. But I write only to describe, not to argue either for or against. As an exciting, wondrous spectacle, there is surely no equal to it. During all this time Lagartijo is passing round to receive his applause; the band has struck up a lively air; the mules with their attendants gallop into the ring; ropes are quickly attached round the necks of the dead horses, who are dragged out at the utmost speed that shouts and blows can urge the mules to go; and lastly the carcase, gory now and begrimed with dust, of the bull is almost whirled out of the ring. The gates close behind it; the band stops dead; the trumpets ring forth again; and while the applause is still almost at its height, and amid shouting that is almost deafening, Toro the second dashes into the arena, and the same sanguinary battle is fought over again until the tale of six is complete.

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

WHICH is the better, a life in town or a life in the country?

It is a moot point, which has been often debated, like the authorship of “Junius” and the “Iliad.” And, as with these interesting subjects and the Phoenix, one is eternally looking for its resurrection. Even as Horace vacillated between his vineyards and the Forum, so, in our own day, it is the fashion to go to and fro between the house in town and the house in the country, never quite contented with either.

“*Beatus qui procul negotiis*,” murmurs the Londoner, whose affairs chain him to his office. And he has hardly been a week in the country when he groans about the tiresomeness of it, the dirty lanes, the smell of the pigs, the dulness of the people,

and the irregularity of the post. Which, then, is the better?

In truth, one might as well ask, which is the more, half-a-dozen or six. The town is good, and the country is good: each is the complement, not the rival of the other. The country is to the town like the wife to the man. It is possible to live in the town or the country, and know nothing of the country or the town. Similarly, a man may live and die a bachelor, and a woman a spinster. But the absolute townsman and the absolute rustic are each ignorant of one half of the pleasures of life; even as bachelors and spinsters are imperfect as men and women.

Yet, though they go hand in hand as constituent parts of human experience, it is permissible to see how country life differs from town life. A man may learn his defects in no way more decisively than by telling his enemy of his errors of conduct or personal failings. Invite, then, the unmitigated rustic to recount the evils of the town, or the unvarying clubman to talk of the country. One may thus see how far both a town life and a country life, taken singly, fall short of an ideal existence. The imagination magnifies both the good and the evil where the mind is predisposed to like or dislike.

Now, the rustic, to be typical, must be of mature age. He must also never have set his hobnailed boot on the sacred Strand. Circumstances, in his youth, were too strong for him: cheap trips, and so forth, there were not. A countryman might then as reasonably have thought of paying a visit to Paradise as to the metropolis. Where he was born he stayed, and there, also, he proposed to die. But he has in the meantime quite changed his conceptions of the great city. When he was a boy he viewed it through the glamour of desire; now, that he is an old man, it is to him a vast, hideous den of iniquity—little else. He is not apt to prate much about the beauties of nature which surround him. A green field is to him nothing but a green field, and a river winding through the meadows evokes as much sentiment from his leathery old heart as a bucketful of water in his backyard. Yet he is content to say a word or two in praise of these beauties when he compares them with the efforts of nature in the town, where

The sun from far peeps with a sickly face,
Too weak the clouds and mighty fogs to chase.

He persists in believing that London is emphatically a "City of Dreadful Night,"

wherein no one ever sees the blue heavens, and where the lamplighter is of more account than all the planets of the empyrean.

But, to get the full force of the old fellow's senile oburgations, the town must further be viewed in its social aspect. His own village may net be immaculate. There are erring men and women among the fields who have set cottage public opinion at defiance. This, however, is a mere nothing to the licensed infamy of town. Our friend believes that every woman in the metropolis paints her face, and that her manners are as shameless as of old in Babylon. As for the men, they are all thimble-riggers in various guises, from the cab-driver to Lord This and That, who sits on the board of a fictitious mining company, designed to swindle countrymen like himself. He will tell you, perhaps, with horror, to clinch the case, that there are hundreds of different kinds of religion in London, and that, nevertheless, most people there never enter a church. And so, in conclusion, he rubs his withered old palms and thanks Heaven he was born by the coppice.

On the other hand, it is easy to read the clubman's indictment of the country. He is not so grossly prejudiced as the man of the fields. Were it possible, indeed, he would be content enough to enjoy "rus in urbe." But there are no "verdant meads" at the back of Piccadilly, and so the fancy dies. Nor does he attempt to keep it alive by frequent visits to the Parks, to

Hear how the birds, on every blooming spray,
With joyous music wake the dawning day.

No; the day never dawns for him. It is always fully awake; and never so lively as when the sun is out of sight.

Nearly a hundred years ago, when the ferment of the French Revolution had awakened a like ferment in a less degree in most European countries, a poet of Sardinia wrote a stirring poem, in which—certainly with some exaggeration—he contrasted the life of the Sarde Baron with the Sarde peasant, his serf. He pictured the lord of acres, in his town house, as happy as luxury, indolence, and lassitude could make him.

"Look at his lordship in his Palace! Behold how he lifts his nightcapped head from the pillow when the sun is at the zenith. At a word, his menial comes cringing to his side; offers him coffee or sweet chocolate; tells him the morning news; and gives him, on a silver tray, a

hundred and one 'billets doux' from his lady friends.

"At one or two o'clock the Baron leaves his bed. By three o'clock, he is ready for the air. With a gold-headed cane in his hand, he steps forth into the street, and draws in the breath of heaven through his wide-inflated nostrils. He smiles at life; the air is good; and his body is so free from fatigue.

"Anon, his lordship breakfasts. There is nothing in the world that a man could desire to eat wanting on his table.

"More at ease with himself than ever, his lordship next pays some visits. Every one rejoices to see him. He flatters, and is flattered with compliments wherever he goes. Thus he kills the hours until the evening. Then theatres, drawing-rooms, and balls open their doors to entertain him.

"At midnight the Baron dines, amid a heavenly flashing of glass and silver, and an oriental luxuriance of flowers; and afterwards, at length, just when his lowly vassal in the fields drags himself wearily from his hard couch, to begin the toils of the day ere the sun is up, his lordship, the Baron, is assisted into his nightcap, and, with a sigh of pleasure, lets his head sink into the downy pillow.

"What can heaven give such a man—so sated with the good things which weak mortals, in their ignorance, think must be celestial joys!"

The counter picture of the miserable peasant may be largely left to the imagination to conceive. He lives like a dog in contrast with his lord—nay, even less happily: for his lordship's dog would reject with contempt such refuse from the baronial tables as the peasant and his family would devour with relish. He toils all the day in the fields. No sun is too hot for him. If it rains, his skin must submit to be soaked. If he be stricken by the fever, he must continue to work, or his children will lack bread. He must work the harder in the intervals of his shiverings. And only when all the light of day has departed—only then may he crawl, with dreary, tired steps, home to his comfortless kennel of sticks and dried grasses, and the stony crust and cup of sour wine, which is the sole meal his poverty can afford him.

As has been said, the picture is, in both sections, an exaggerated one. But it may well be viewed as, in a sense, a parallel between the life of our friend in the country and our friend in the town.

The latter, when the days of his active youth are over, soon forgets the exhilarating pleasures of the mountains, and the streams, and the woods. Year by year he shortens the brief visits which stern fashion compels him to pay to this or that bleak moor in the north, and this or that country house in the provinces. He goes to the north by a night train, studious to arrange that he may fall asleep ere he is out of sight of the chimneys of the metropolis, and that he may not awake until he is besought to arise and step into the carriage that is to take him to the shooting-box which is in fact nothing more nor less than a town house set in the country.

The sport for which he is dragged from his beloved club-rooms and Pall Mall, is, in fact, a terrible bore to him. He does not even pretend to like it. He shrugs his shoulders, and yields to the demands of convention with graceful protest, so dissimulated, that none but himself perceives the sincerity of it; and he sighs for the day when he may return to town.

Thanks to the artificial tone of his mind, and the artificial manner of his life—each of which is the inexorable consequence of the other—in time he acquires an absolute detestation for the country pure and simple. He shudders at the thought of it, as at an ill-cooked chop. Now and then he is called upon to give the reason for his distaste. It is hard at first; but, later, he conjures up an imaginative state of rural life, and this fiction he flogs persistently with the flail of his scoffs. Vain is it to talk to him of the dignity of honest labour in the fields; of agreeable milkmaids with fresh bloom on their cheeks; and of the muscular ploughman embracing his comely spouse ere he sets forth for the plough. Idle is it to babble to him about green fields, dewy grass, the scented hawthorn wreathed with honeysuckle and roses, snowy clouds chasing each other between the round earth and the blue beyond, the strong kisses of wind undefiled by contact with bricks and mortar, the note of the cuckoo, and the gentle melody of doves in the copses.

This is all nothing—less than nothing to our town friend. How should it be otherwise, when he has brought himself to rely, for spectacular diversion, solely upon the theatres of the town! The songs of birds would sound discord to his well-disciplined ear. He sees only "the toiler's sweaty brow," and the grime of his daily task. How intolerable the monotony of

the country! The endless rows of the ragged hedges in the lanes; the mire under foot; the crawling worms; the dull-eyed, slow-tongued rustics, with their excruciating brogue, and their attire of so archaic a mode; the ennui of the life and its hundred insufferable privations!

A few years ago the writer voyaged, from northern seas to the south, with a party of Icelandic youths bound for the colleges of Copenhagen. When they set foot in Scotland, nothing amazed them more than the sight of trees. They broke into a confused cry of adjectives and exclamations. Their home-land, so cold and infertile, can hardly rear a shrub taller than themselves. Thus, an elm, a hundred feet high, was, at first sight, regarded as a distinct marvel of nature.

Our townsman, by-and-by, grows to a condition not unlike that of the untravelling Icelander. He may put up his glass at a butterfly or a crow, without being suspected of inanity. When his legs begin to totter, a change in the method of his life is not to be thought of. And so he is content and fain to admit, with a writer who did not dissemble his preference for metropolitan bustle, that, at the best, "the country is but a kind of healthy grave . . . the delusions of flowers, green turf, and birds . . . all afford slight gratification . . . not worth an hour of rational conversation. . . . The real use of it—the country—is to find food for cities; but as for a residence of any man, who is neither butcher nor baker, nor food-grower in any of its branches, it is a dreadful waste of existence and abuse of life."

Even if, for the sake of argument, our friend will admit that there is any happiness in the country, he will, with the same writer, stipulate that "it requires a visit to London every year to assure yourself of this truth." Thus fortified, he lives himself in blissful contentment to "that scene of simplicity, truth, and nature—a London rout."

But enough.

Of two things—where both are good and of such a kind that no exact comparison may be drawn between them—neither is better nor worse than the other. And how good both a town life and a country life are, only those happy ones completely know who are privileged to fly from the one to the other at their own sweet or restless will. They may fall out of humour with town while they are in town, and feel aggrieved with the country when

they are among its trees and solitudes; but they are thus, through their own discontent, forced to acknowledge that both town and country are good, indeed, very good; and if they are as wise as they are fortunate, they will further admit that, even when they find the town too lively or fatiguing, or the country too quiet and dull, the fault is really, in each case, in them, and neither in the town nor the country.

O WISTFUL EYES!

O WISTFUL eyes! Where did you find your gleam?
In the soft radiance of the April skies?
In the rays wavering in the quiet stream
Where pure and white the water-lily lies?

'Mid wondering musings o'er the tangled scheme
Men make of life? or does the lustrous light,
That underlies their pensive beauty, shine
With the hushed glory of the first love dream,

That gives e'en hope deferred resistless might,
To make of earth a happy Paradise?
God keep the soul within them fresh and fine,
O wistful eyes!

HER INHERITANCE.

A STRANGE STORY. IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

TWO days later, at about the same time in the evening, Mrs. Ferrars was alone in the little sitting-room, looking very impatient, and rather anxious. She had set out that morning on the road to what she called "that bogey house," thinking to meet her husband as they had arranged, and, instead, she had met a boy, who stopped her with the enquiry:

"Be you the missus of the gentleman at 'The Glen'?"

On her answering that she was, he had thrust a note into her hands, and had retreated, with many backward glances at a person so intimately connected with such a celebrity as the gentleman who had voluntarily passed a night alone with old Sam in the haunted house.

The note was from her husband, and simply said that she was not to expect him until the evening, and was not to be uneasy.

She had been uneasy all the same, and, ever since the time had come when she might begin to expect him, she had been restless and disturbed. As the clock struck nine, she drew up the blind, and looked out of the window.

"I wish he would come," she said to herself; "I wish he had never heard of the place. He is so sensitive, dear old thing,

and all his imagination was stirred by the odd connection between that picture and my dream. How vivid it was last night! If he has persuaded himself that he heard or saw something, he will never forget it. I wish he would come. Oh, there he is! Well, he doesn't seem to be in any hurry now."

Hubert Ferrars was coming down the street with evident reluctance in his walk and manner. She watched him come up to the cottage door; saw him pause for a moment before he entered; and then she went to the door of the room, intending to reproach him, half in fun, and half in earnest, for her long, lonely day. But as he came up the stairs towards her, the sight of his face stopped her—he was so very pale, and there was a tense look of horror in his eyes. She could see him distinctly the moment he reached the foot of the stairs, but she was hidden by a bend in the staircase until he was close to her. As he turned the corner, and came upon her suddenly—she had not moved or spoken in her anxious contemplation of his haggard face, and weary, reluctant movements—he staggered back with a half-articulate cry, and would have fallen, but for his instinctive clutch at the banisters. She ran to him with a little pitying exclamation.

"Oh, Hubert, my dear old boy!" she said; "what have you been doing to yourself?"

He did not answer; but he took her face in his two hands and kissed it—long, trembling kisses they were.

"Come and sit down, dear," she said. "Where have you been all day? You are dead tired."

She drew him into the room and made him sit down to the table, still holding her hand in his, as if he needed the sense of touch to assure him of her reality. She would not ask him any questions, or let him speak until he had eaten, and then she put him into an arm-chair, and, kneeling at his feet, said, with her arms round him, and her cheek against his:

"Would you like to tell me now, dear?"

He bent his head slightly, but did not speak, and she continued:

"What is it, Hubert? Did you—did you—see something?"

He bent his head again, and his clasp tightened round her, as if he feared to see her slip from his grasp. She waited a moment, and then whispered:

"What was it? What is it haunts 'The Glen'?"

There was a pause, and then she heard his voice—hollow, toneless, almost inaudible:

"You!" he said.

She started from his hold with a shuddering cry of incredulous horror, and for a moment they looked at one another, speechless and motionless. Her first ghastly impression was that he had gone mad; and, reading that thought in her white, terrified face, he mastered himself by a violent effort, and spoke again in a more natural tone:

"Thea, dearest, I am not mad; don't look at me like that. At first I thought that I would not tell you, but afterwards I felt that the memory would stand between us always; that we must face it together, awful as it is."

He drew her back into his arms, and she let him hold her for several moments, without speaking.

"Tell me all about it," she whispered, at last; and, in a low, thick voice, speaking in short, abrupt sentences, he told her.

"It was about one o'clock. We were sitting in—in the room to the right of the door as you go in——"

"I know," she said; "go on."

He shivered slightly, and continued:

"It was a strange experience to sit there waiting for something supernatural with that old man, to whom it was so familiar as to be no longer terrible. He told me that—it—was only seen occasionally, generally about this time of the year; always on the twentieth of November."

She lifted her head with a sudden start. "My birthday!" she said; and he drew her closer as he went on:

"He told me that no one knew exactly how long since it had first appeared; and that it had altered in appearance as the years passed. 'When I saw it first,' he said, 'about eighteen years ago, it was a little child running about the house as a real child might have done; then it was a pretty young girl; and now—ah, sir!' he said, suddenly, dropping his voice to a whisper, 'look!' He pointed behind me, and I turned quickly. There, in the old-fashioned oak settle, near the empty hearth, I saw—you." He broke off, and pressed his lips to the head which was lying on his shoulder. "You were looking, apparently, straight at me; but you took no notice of me, and seemed unconscious of my presence. I think the feeling of sick horror that crept

over me as I looked at you arose first from that—it was unspeakably awful. I watched you, as you sat there, paralysed. By-and-by, you rose and left the room, and I followed you as you went: into the hall, out into the little wood behind the house, round the garden, back again upstairs, and into the little room at the stairhead. It was there—how long after I don't know—but it was there that at last, with a ghastly feeling of terror inexpressible, I saw your form gradually grow indistinct. I saw you fading slowly from my sight. I saw you——” A strong and uncontrollable shudder shook him from head to foot, and the strong hands that held hers were icy-cold and trembling. After a moment he resumed, “I must have fainted, I suppose, for the next thing I remember is the bright morning light, and old Sam dashing water in my face. I felt dazed and stupefied, and I was only conscious that I must have time to think, so I sent you that note, dear, and I have been walking about ever since.”

There was a long silence. Mrs. Ferrars lifted her head, kissed her husband tenderly, rose and walked to the window. The stars were shining brightly, and she stood there looking up at them. At last she turned and came back to him, as he sat watching her, still with the strained look of horror on his face.

“My poor dear,” she said, standing by his side and gently stroking his hair, “my poor dear.”

She was pale, and there was something hushed in her manner and her low voice; but otherwise she was quite herself again, and seemed to be rather sympathising with her husband than feeling on her own account. He felt this at once, and looked at her in amazement.

“What can we do?” he said.

“You have thought of nothing—of no plan for—for laying me?” she asked, with a little, hysterical laugh.

He shook his head.

“Then I will tell you what I think. It is not to be explained, of course; but there must be some link—of which we know nothing—between my life and this mysterious house, and we must find out what it is. I have known very little of my father and mother. My mother died when I was born, you know; my father two years after; and the Leasons, who were so good to me, knew nothing of their life in England—had never even seen my mother. But we can learn the history of the house,

and we will go to Mrs. Green to-morrow, and she will tell us. She knows, I am sure. I—I would rather not go to sleep, I think; but you are tired out, my dear, and now you must rest.”

The slow night wore itself away at last. He was too thoroughly worn out to resist her long, and slept the heavy sleep of utter exhaustion, while she sat beside him thinking. She was very far from being an imaginative woman; but the story she had heard, and its connection with her constantly-recurring dream, had impressed her almost in spite of herself. Her husband's horror, too, had, to a certain extent, communicated itself to her, and she felt as though she would never be able to sleep quietly again. To think that while she was apparently lying quietly by her husband's side she was visible in another place; that there was a force in her of which she had been unconscious, over which she had no control! It was impossible! It was horrible! And Hubert! he would never see her sleeping without remembering that other figure, without thinking that, perhaps, even as he looked at her, it was there in the old farmhouse. He was right—the thought would haunt them always. What did it mean? What could they do?

Mrs. Green received them the next morning without any apparent surprise—early though it was. She darted one keen, eager look at Hubert Ferrars, and waited for them to speak. There was a moment's silence as the three stood together in the dim little room, and then Hubert Ferrars began.

“I think you must know why we have come to you to-day, Mrs. Green. You know what—what I saw last night at ‘The Glen;’ and you will understand that we cannot rest—my wife and I—until this mystery is cleared up.”

His breath came quickly. He paused; and Mrs. Green said:

“How can I help you, sir?”

“You can tell us all you know about the house and its inhabitants. Who were the people who lived there twenty years ago?”

The woman seemed to be undecided for a moment whether to speak or no; and Hubert Ferrars and his wife watched her anxiously. At last she said, suddenly:

“I'll tell you, sir. There's no reason why I shouldn't, except that I was never a one to talk; and ever since I saw the lady the other morning, I've had the horrors as the

ghost never give them to me. If I can help you to see through it I will. Seven-and-twenty years ago I was a maid at 'The Glen.' There was three in family—my mistress, her second husband, and her child by her first marriage—Miss Dorothy Frome."

"Dorothy Frome!" repeated Mrs. Ferrars, excitedly. "Hubert, that was my mother's name—the only thing I know about her. Dorothy is my name, too, though I've been called Dorothea or Thea. Oh, go on; go on."

The woman looked at her for a moment, and then began again slowly, speaking more easily as she went on, and her habitual reserve gradually gave way.

"She was a pretty, delicate slip of a girl, was Miss Dorothy, with blue eyes and yellow hair, and full of whims and fancies. In the spring of '68 my mistress died. The place went to Mr. Farmer, and he and Miss Dorothy lived there together. He wasn't not to say unkind to her; but they was never friends together; and all Miss Dorothy's love seemed to go out to the old house and garden. She'd cared about it all her life more as folks care for other folks than for places; but them two years after her mother's death she got to love it so as never was. It seemed to be tied up in her life like. At the end of two years there came a gentleman about the place a-courtin' of her, and she fell in love with him. Mr. Philip Marston was his name."

"Ah!" interrupted Mrs. Ferrars. "It is, Hubert; it is! That was my father."

"But the old man couldn't abide him," continued Mrs. Green. "No one knew why; for there was nothing against him as ever I could hear. And he vowed that if Miss Dorothy married him, neither she nor child of hers should ever set foot in 'The Glen' again. She did marry him; for he loved her very true, and pressed her hard, and they went away together. For ten months after I never heard nothing of her; and then one day I saw a letter all crushed up lying on the parlour floor. It wasn't the place for a letter, so I picked it up and—well, I suppose I had no call to do it, but I read it. It was from Miss Dorothy's husband, and it begged and prayed of Mr. Farmer to let Miss Dorothy come back to her old home, for she was ill—expecting of her baby—and fretting herself to death for it. It asked Mr. Farmer, if he wouldn't have this, to promise—but I can tell you the very words, they've

stuck by me all these years: 'Will you satisfy her sick fancy by a promise that her child, should it live, shall be allowed to learn to know and love her mother's home?' And it said how Miss Dorothy, in her weakness, was just crazy to have her child care for the place she had loved so dear. How she fancied, being so ill, that she could leave her love of it to her child; how she pined and fretted night and day. But Mr. Farmer was a hard man, and stood by his oath; and Miss Dorothy never came home again. After a good bit I began to wonder whether her little child had lived, and whether it would ever come to the old farm. And one evening in September, going on for four years from the time when I picked up the letter, I saw, coming out of Miss Dorothy's old room, a little, fair-haired, blue-eyed child. I'd thought so much about how it would be to have a child about the place, that, somehow, I wasn't a bit took aback, and I just stood and watched it. It toddled down the passage towards me, and was close to my knees when, all of a sudden—as I stretched out my hands to it—it wasn't there any more. It gave me a bad turn that time; but I saw it so often, through the next three months, that I got used to it like. Every one about the house saw it at times, and at last, when Mr. Farmer died, nobody wasn't willing to take the place. People have tried it now and again; but always about this time of year, from now on to November, the figure comes back, always going about the house quite at home and natural-like. First, it was the baby; then, a slip of a girl; and now—you know what, sir."

Mrs. Ferrars had sat, since she had understood that she was listening to her mother's story, quite motionless—her eyes fixed on the speaker's face, her hands clasped in one another. As Mrs. Green ended, and silence fell on the little room, she drew a long breath, her face quivered, and she turned to her husband with a low cry.

"Oh, Hubert! My mother, my poor, young mother! Longing, and longing, and dying unsatisfied! Oh, my poor mother!"

He put his arms round her and soothed her tenderly, and then said, turning to Mrs. Green:

"We will see you again before we go away. Thank you for telling us this."

"You're welcome, sir, I'm sure," replied the woman. "Is it—is it Miss Dorothy's daughter?"

"Yes," he answered; "yes, it is."

And they left the cottage. No words passed between them as to what was to be done next; no words were needed. In about half-an-hour they stood at the garden gate of "The Glen," and there Hubert Ferrars looked at his wife and hesitated. But she put out her hand to him and said:

"Come with me." And together they went up the garden path and into the house. All over it they went; through the garden and through the wood, and back into the house, and at last, when they came again to the little room at the head of the stairs, she dropped his hand and went in alone. When she came out to him once more, there was a strange, awed look in her eyes. "Let us go," she said; "let us go. I think she will be satisfied."

After that day she never saw "The Glen" again, waking or dreaming; and her spirit haunted the place no more.

A LUCKY SHOT.

A COMPLETE STORY.

SOME years since, when I was a young fellow of six-and-twenty, I was mate of a West Indian trading regularly to Nevis and St. Kitts. She was a barque of three hundred and fifty tons, and her name was the "Robert," and she sailed from Bristol. We were on our homeward-passage when the incident I am about to describe took place. I must premise that we had four passengers, two gentlemen and two ladies; the latter, the wife and daughter of a planter, by name Carmichael. The elder lady was about forty-five; a handsome, gracious sort of woman, such as a planter's wife ought to be, and such as were not uncommon in the days of which I am writing. The daughter was about two-and-twenty; a beautiful girl, with all the bewitching graces and fascinating charm of a true-born creole. We were twenty-one days out from Charlestown, and notwithstanding that the old barque was by no means a fast sailer, we had made good progress, and were as near as possible in mid-ocean. It was the end of July, and the weather had been of the most glorious description, and very hot; but, after the sultry heat of the tropics, we did not find it oppressive. For two days past we had made little progress. The wind had been light and variable, and now it was a dead calm. The ship was motionless as

far as progress was concerned; but her head was boxing all round the compass. We had awnings up fore and aft; for, where there was nothing to intercept the burning rays of the July sun, the decks were so hot that the pitch boiled out of the seams.

The dinner was over; the sun was slowly sinking in the west; and we had all come on deck, being anxious to get as much air as we could, for the cabin of a sugar-ship is generally stuffy. The deep, placid sea was more peacefully calm than I had ever before seen it. Not a flaw, not a ripple, not an undulation broke the tranquil surface of the glass-like sea. Captain Sarsfield and the two gentlemen, Mr. Cheeseman and Mr. Thompson, were sitting on the taffrail smoking their cigars, and Mrs. Carmichael and Miss Julia were reclining in wicker-chairs and fanning themselves. At the young lady's feet lay a large Newfoundland dog belonging to Captain Sarsfield, blinking in the sunlight which came slanting in under the awning, and now and again looking up into her face and putting out his tongue, as much as to say: "It's dreadfully hot, isn't it?"

No one, who has not seen a creole girl reclining at her ease, can realise the beautiful picture which Julia Carmichael presented as she sat there languidly fanning herself. Apart from the beauty of her features, and the striking fairness of her skin, her figure was almost faultless in its symmetry, in the curve of its lines, and beautiful in its flexible sinuosity. She had, too, that natural grace, that untrammelled ease, that refined voluptuousness of attitude and movement which are the natural gifts of the creole, and which no art can counterfeit. But the crowning charm of all was her sweet and gentle disposition. Mrs. Carmichael was a general favourite; but Julia was queen of the ship. Captain Sarsfield, the gentlemen, and the ship's company generally were her devoted slaves.

She had been sitting in silence, gazing out on to the calm sea. Suddenly she turned her head and spoke:

"Captain Sarsfield," she said, in a soft, musical voice, "I think we are going to have a breeze."

"Certainly! By all means, my dear young lady. I see no signs of it at present; but if you say there is a breeze coming, there is no one on board this ship would think of contradicting you."

"No; but—Captain Sarsfield——"

"Not another word, my dear lady. Mr. Turnbull, see all clear for a breeze."

"Ay, ay, sir," I answered. "Forward, there! Run up the foretopmast staysail; there's a breeze coming."

"Mr. Turnbull," remonstrated Julia, "you are too bad! You are worse than the Captain. What will the men say!"

"Say, Miss Carmichael!—that the Admiral has given his orders, and we must obey. So ho! Well there with the hal-yards. Which side will you have the sheet trimmed?"

"You may trim it to starboard, Mr. Turnbull," she replied with great gravity.

"Take a pull of the starboard sheet," I called out. "Well, there! belay! What next, Miss Julia?"

"Lower one of the quarter-boats, and take me for a row. The sea looks very beautiful, and I think it would do me good."

I elevated my eyebrows, and said:

"What about the breeze, Miss Carmichael?"

"Oh, that will not come yet. After tea will be time enough."

I looked this time at the Captain, who gave a smiling assent, saying:

"If Miss Carmichael will permit me, I think I should like a row, too."

"Certainly, Captain Sarsfield, with much pleasure." Then turning to me, she said: "The Captain can have the gig, and I will have the quarter-boat."

"Lay aft the watch," I called out, "and lower the port quarter-boat and the gig. And, carpenter," I went on, "let us have the oars up sharp, Miss Carmichael is going to have a row before the breeze comes."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the carpenter, and he dived down below in search of the oars.

The two boats were lowered and manned. I took charge of one and the Captain of the other.

"Come along, Nep," said Julia, when she had taken her seat. The dog, nothing loth, jumped into the boat, and took his station on the prow, as though he was looking out for squalls.

"Phew!" exclaimed Mr. Cheeseman, as we pushed away from the ship, "how hot it is!"

"Not so hot as it is at St. Kitts," answered Julia.

"Perhaps not," replied the Captain; "but it's hot enough in all conscience."

Nep seemed of the Captain's opinion, for, at this moment, he sprang overboard and began swimming about in a manner which showed he enjoyed his bath.

"I should like to follow his example," exclaimed Mr. Thompson.

"What about the sharks?" replied Mr. Cheeseman.

"Sharks!" cried Mr. Thompson; "there are no sharks in these latitudes, are there?"

"Aren't there! I don't know so much about that," said Captain Sarsfield. "I have seen sharks in ten west, and even in the Channel. So that it's more than probable that there are some hereabouts."

"What's that they are saying about sharks?" asked Mrs. Carmichael.

"The Captain is saying that there are plenty of them in these latitudes," I replied.

"How beautiful the old ship looks!" remarked Julia. "I never saw her to such advantage before."

Meantime Nep, after circling about between the boats and the ship, had apparently had enough of it and was slowly swimming back to the ship. Suddenly there was a commotion on board, and the second-mate took up the speaking-trumpet and hailed us.

"Boat ahoy!" he cried. "Get the dog on board, there are two sharks coming down on him!"

"Give way, my lads! Scott is right—I can see their fins. Pull, my bonnies, pull!"

"Here, Nep! Nep!" cried Julia, excitedly.

But Nep did not hear, or else paid no attention, and swam slowly on.

"Poor thing!" cried Mrs. Carmichael; "he is swimming right into the shark's mouth!"

"Nep! Nep! Nep!" shrieked Julia. "Come back, come back!"

The dog evidently heard her, for he turned and began to swim back.

"Pull, my lads, pull for your lives!" I shouted, "or it will be all up with poor Nep." At this moment, the dog, seeing we were rapidly approaching him, relaxed his efforts. "Nep! Nep! here, boy, here!" I cried, excitedly, and he again began to swim towards us.

Captain Sarsfield had also realised the dog's peril, and the two boats were being urged through the water at racing speed. It was a moment of intense excitement. Julia and her mother sat pale and motion-

less, with their hands clasped. The dreadful monsters were about a cable's length from the dog, and were rapidly nearing him; but we were somewhat nearer, and, as I thought, we were outstripping them.

"Well done, my bonnies! Hurrah! Hurrah! we shall beat them yet!" I shouted.

At the moment, a puff of smoke burst from the ship's side. There was a report, and a splash in the water; the second-mate had loaded and fired one of the carronades, and the ball had struck at least one of the sharks, for, when the commotion caused by the shot striking the water had subsided, they had disappeared, and the water was discoloured with blood.

"Bravo, Scott!" I cried, "that was a lucky shot; the right thing to do, and done at the right time."

The next minute Nep was alongside, and was hauled into the boat, and a ringing cheer came from the men on board, and was taken up by us in the boats.

It is not to be supposed that Nep understood what all the cheering was about; but he responded to them by standing up on the thwarts and barking vociferously. It was quite evident that he had no idea of what a narrow squeak for his life he had had.

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

BY MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER V. LOVE'S CONFLICT.

YOU went half-way upstairs and then turned to the left, up two steps, to find yourself in the pleasantest little room imaginable. It was quite an unaccountable little room, and had apparently been designed in a humorous moment by the architect of Prospect Place. It obtruded itself in among the rooms of the next house like a wen, and had a little window, with a small arched dormer, that made the light within always mellow and shady even on the hottest summer day. In this small window were always kept one or two choice plants, and, looking through them, you caught a glimpse of one of the outermost branches of the poplar-tree, and could watch it stirring to and fro against a bit of blue sky.

In times past, when No. 8, Prospect Place, had been as full of youngsters as a dove-cot of young pigeons, this room had belonged to Dumphie; but now that bed-

rooms were in less demand, he had moved to what had once been called "the boys' room," and Aunt Dacie had taken possession of the little quaint chamber, which, by the way, had evidently at first tried to become an octagon, so oddly were two of its corners cut off. It was known as "Aunt Dacie's room," and Dumphie had seen fit to christen it "the heart of the house"—so many plans were there discussed, so many tender greetings and sad farewells had taken place within its walls. The spirit of Aunt Dacie seemed in it and around it, for quaint old-fashioned treasures had drifted into it, and, somehow, the scent of sandalwood lingered about them all. The small work-table near the window, with its dainty appointments and tiny golden thimble with a little stand all to itself, could not possibly have belonged to any one else. Just now, a sunshine all its own made the little chamber bright, for here and there were bowls of Indian china filled with golden daffodils, while, on the work-table, a group of yellow roses, with just the faintest flush of rose in their innermost hearts, gave out their sweet breath unsparingly.

Aunt Dacie had, indeed, planned quite a little festival for this, the first day of Mazie's betrothal. She had had ambitious ideas, had Aunt Dacie, and confided the same to Kezia, who suggested jumble cakes as a form of refreshment without which any festival whatever would naturally be a mere fond delusion.

Kezia was tearfully happy over the idea that her precious young lady was going to marry Mr. Draycott. For a time Kezia had distrusted that gentleman—as has been already seen—but gradually he won her over, until Dumphie used to laugh and say he was really quite jealous, at which Kezia would retreat down the kitchen stairs in high flutter and pride, it being delightful to any woman of any age to have it supposed that she can be a bone of contention between two masculine hearts. And now, this gentleman with his bright smile and his kindly eyes, his little courteous words of greeting, which to Kezia meant so much, was going to marry Miss Margaret!

"Well, well, the world does go round to be sure," said she, "and brings strange days with it, too; and we'll be havin' a wedding, Miss Dacie, same as when Master Randall—why, it were just such another night as this—just as rainy and rough."

But Kezia felt that this last was an unhappy touch. She saw her mistress's face change and pale, and stuck the corner of her apron into her mouth, as though to stop the egress of any more foolish words. Not even now, when the sorrow of her loss lay so many years behind, could Miss Dacie bear any reference to Lucille's death without wincing. The thought of that wedding night when the poplar-tree swirled and moaned in the wind, and the rain beat upon the panes—the night when Randall's boyish face looked at her through the shivered glass of the fallen frame—was, even now, often present to her mind. To connect them at all with Mazie's betrothal to Louis Draycott, and the marriage that would before long make one day memorable—more especially with the poplar-tree creaking and moaning just as it did then—seemed an uncanny thing, from which she shrank instinctively with a repulsion which she felt in truth to be exaggerated and inadequate. Her heart was full of agitated happiness. Mazie had looked so like her mother as she stood by her lover's side, looking up with fond eyes into his face! It was like a renewal of the old romance rejuvenated, and made more beautiful than the one that had gone before. It was like Randall and Lucille as they might have been in the youth and heyday of life, had they then met and loved. There was no likeness between the square-set Major and the tall lithe figure of the prison-chaplain; but in both was seen that single-hearted devotion to the one woman the world held for them, which Aunt Dacie recognised as the highest type of love. She sang softly and quaveringly to herself as she made her little plans overnight for the morrow's pleasure; bethought her gladly of the gay blossoms in the room which, henceforth, she was determined should be consecrated to the lovers. She resolved to ask Dumphie to soften the heart of the curmudgeon, and get leave to come home at least an hour earlier than usual, by which time the jumbles would be done to a turn, and the feast outspread. She smiled and shook her head as the thought crossed her that there was no fear that Louis would be late. She had a wonderful intuition into the ways and habits of lovers, this dear, sweet gentlewoman whose own life had known no more living romance than was represented by an old kid glove that once a man's lips had kissed.

After her chat with Kezia, she had gone

upstairs to bed; but had been unable to resist the temptation of a peep into Mazie's room. The door was on the latch, so made little sound as she pushed it gently open; only that—no more—for she did not cross the threshold. She stood quite still, hardly drawing her breath at what she saw within, for there, on her knees beside the little white-draped bed, was her child, her darling, Lucille's precious legacy of trust and love. Mazie's long, bright hair fell in a cloud above her white, clinging robe; the gracious head was bowed upon the open hands; the exquisite sense of the joy and the gladness, and the great gift of love that had come into her life, was over her. Her young heart swelled with thankfulness to the giver of all good; she prayed for Heaven's blessing on the man she loved; and, for herself, that wisdom might be given to her to be his true helpmeet, friend, and companion, all in one. That these things were so was borne in upon Aunt Dacie's mind as she stood watching her darling for one long, tender moment, and then, with a prayer rising from her own heart, too, left her alone with the God at whose feet she laid the chaplet of her joy. . . .

Which of us has not known some home made beautiful by the happy ripple of laughter, the sound of many voices, the scent of many flowers, the song and the melody, the little home-jest, the sunshine of love; which of us has not known such a home, and then seen it change all in a moment? Hushed are the laughter and the music; the flowers fade in the vases and no one takes any heed; the voice of jesting is silent; no one sings on the stairs or chatters in the garden as of old. Only cautious, fearful footsteps steal about the house; now and again you may hear the sound of low, subdued voices, or a hurried sentence cut in two by a stifled sob. Some one lies grievously sick in a darkened room, struck down suddenly from strength to weakness, from life to possible death. The house of joy has become the house of mourning.

There are few sadder things in life than this sudden halting of the wheels of life, this terrible sense of silence and oppression, this overclouding of a sky where all has been so brightly blue, and where the lark of happiness has sung so sweetly at "Heaven's gate" of joy.

It was thus in that simple home, round whose fortunes the thread of this story has wound itself.

Heavy sorrow, bitter pain, had fallen like a blight upon bright hopes and fond imaginings. Aunt Dacie seemed to have aged ten years since yesternight. Dumphie, since the moment when he let in poor Bessy, the strange visitor of that earliest morning hour that we all, for some reason or other, connect with the idea of misfortune and death, had looked quite a different Dumphie from any that we have ever known. To hope against hope had ever been the new "Papa Birt's" characteristic; to bring good common sense and earnest effort to bear on every difficulty, this had been to be Dumphie. But now the sorrow had come that held no smallest grain of hope to be sifted out from the black mass; the difficulty had come that no common sense, no resolve could undermine or get round.

As for Mazie——

One scarce dare touch on that. Where she laid her chaplet of joy, there, in time, she will lay her wreath of cypress—but not yet, not yet. She bides now in that dark valley of desolation, where neither hope nor comfort may come. She is dazed by the destruction which has come upon her—yet more by the sorrow which has come to the man who is dearer to her than life itself. Perhaps it would be truer to say that, so far, she is hardly conscious of all that this terrible story that Bessy—poor Bessy, sodden with rain, tossed and tumbled by the night wind, sobbing as she talked—told to Dumphie in the ghastly, struggling light—Bessy, who had walked every weary step of the way from the prison, through streets which the storm had made as empty as though they had been the streets of some city of the dead—means.

Not all Dumphie's tenderness could do much to soften the tale he had to tell to his sister Mazie; nothing could blunt the cruel edge of the knife that his hand had to thrust into her gentle breast.

As she lay lifeless in his arms, slain—or so it seemed to him—by the words his own lips had spoken, the memory of the message of the olden days rushed through his mind with a stab of infinite pain: "Tell him to love his little sister, and to be very good to her. Tell him I said so."

"Oh, mother, mother!" he cried, in the overwhelming bitterness of the moment, "I have done my best—I have done all I could, but I could not shield her from this!"

They were simple people, these, whose story we are telling. They had none but

very old-fashioned ideas, and were of one heart and one mind—none differing from the other. If a woman had a husband, or a man a wife, living, then neither could marry any other unless death should cut the bond. No lesser severance would aught avail. It was not so much that they laid down these laws, as that they took them for granted, and life and thought were coloured by them. If Louis Draycott had a wife living, then Mazie could not be his wife. The passion, and pain, and infinite sadness of it all were as deeply realised by them as it was possible for it to be realised by any one; but it was all inevitable. There was nothing for them to do but to help each other, as best they could, to bear a bitter burden of sorrow, and parting, and loneliness. It was a simple creed, simply lived up to. That others in the world thought differently did not even seem to touch them. They mourned over their suffering darling as only such hearts can mourn; but, they bowed before the inevitable with dignity and courage. Indeed, it was wonderful how even Mazie herself—fragile and sensitive as she was—rallied after the first prostration. She had to think of the man she loved. That was a force sufficient to brace her failing nerve, and give her all a woman's power of endurance. But it was only when the hour that should bring him to her side drew near, that this new strength became manifest.

"I must try to be brave, for his sake," she said to Aunt Dacie. "That will help him best." And Aunt Dacie had no word to say in reply, for the pitiful pathos of the white, resolute young face was well-nigh more than she could bear to look upon.

And now, in that same pleasant little parlour—in that room called, in happier moments, "the heart of the house," Louis Draycott awaits the coming of that dear love of his, whom cruel fate is about to wrest from his arms—though neither fate, nor life, nor death, nor any other creature, can tear her from his heart.

All trace of the storm of the past night had passed away, except that every leaf on every tree shone greener and brighter for the drenching; and that the sparrows chirped more persistently to show their appreciation of the renewal of sunshine. A bit of blue could be seen through the dormer window; the poplar never looked more delicately green; the yellow daffodils, the golden roses, with the blushing hearts

—all were fair to see. But their beauty was displayed for one who saw not; one whose haggard, weary eyes scarce seemed to see anything, save the door that would open to let his darling pass.

Aunt Dacie had met Louis Draycott as he came in. She had set herself this task, and fulfilled it with the noble self-command of which such fragile women will at supreme moments prove capable. It seemed to her as though a lifetime lay between their farewell the evening before, and this greeting, in which each feared look or word from the other. She led him by the hand, as if he had been a child, to the little room that was her own, and there she left him, among the flowers, and the pretty, glancing lights and shadows that came in through the window from the stirring leaves outside, to await poor Mazie's coming.

"I will let her know that you are here, my—my dear," said Aunt Dacie, hurrying from the room, closing the door, and sitting down helplessly a moment at the stair-head, just because her knees grew feeble, and refused to hold her up.

What a day it had been! Never before had such a thing happened as for Dumphie to send a message to the City to say that he was unavoidably kept away from business. This stupendous event was in itself enough to upset any one; and then the listening to Dumphie's account of his interview with Louis in the early dawn of the morning; the white, hopeless face of Mazie as she listened to the story of what her lover's life had been in the past, of what sorrows, what trials had been his! These things would have seemed pain and trouble enough to suffice for a lifetime, and yet had all been compressed into a few terrible hours.

Aunt Dacie never knew how she pulled herself together, and went her way to seek out the brother and sister who, hand in hand, awaited her coming. Dumphie had hardly left Mazie's side since his return from the prison in the morning. He had hardly let go her hand. His nearness and his touch seemed to give her strength. He tried hard to put away the haunting vision of Louis Draycott's face as he had seen it last—tear-stained, haggard, almost unrecognisable—and to concentrate his mind upon the stricken girl beside him. He coaxed her to take a little food. Knowing the ordeal that was before her, he tried to prepare her for it. He prayed for wisdom to calm, and soothe, and strengthen her. When Aunt Dacie came in and saw the

two together, clinging the one to the other, she had no words to say; but by a gesture she made Dumphie understand.

"Louis is come," he said, quietly, turning to Mazie; and it was strange to both of them to see the new life and strength the words called into being. The very knowledge that the man she loved was near, acted upon her as a cordial might have done. The longing to comfort him set aside, for the time being, her own suffering. She walked firmly to the door, and then turned with a pitiful, parting smile to the two who watched her.

Once more they stand face to face—these two, between whom lies an impassable gulf, yet whose faith and love, in and for each other, might span even a greater.

Louis, standing pale and calm by the little window, speaks to her, as she enters, with fond imperiousness.

"Come here," he says, holding out his arms, and Mazie goes quickly towards him, with such a wondrous light of Heaven knows what resolve and tenderness on her face, that a looker-on might have fancied their meeting the greeting of lovers reunited after long parting, not the beginning of a separation bitter as that of death itself.

With sweet, passionate kisses they had parted the night before; with sweet, passionate kisses they meet again; and Mazie, her head laid back upon her lover's breast, smiles up into his face, content, for the moment, in his nearness and his tenderness; blind, or striving to be so, to what is coming, and must come.

For awhile they are both silent. The shadows flicker through the scented geraniums, the poplar rustles softly in the breeze that is just strong enough to ruffle its countless leaves, turning them inside out to show their silver linings.

"My love—my darling," he says at length, speaking almost in a whisper, though there is none to hear, "tell me—have they told you all?"

Mazie must wake from out that dream of content. Lying on his breast, she has almost cheated herself into imagining all the sorrow that has come upon them both to be but a mad, strange fancy—a nightmare that will pass—a mist that will vanish, and leave the clear shining of the sun in the lovely blue of a cloudless sky, and for a moment, as her lover speaks, a look of terror passes across her face, and she clings about him, trembling in every limb.

"Nay," he says, "do not answer me, if it hurts you so much to speak——"

At this she finds her tongue, and trembles no more. In her heart she is calling herself a pitiful coward.

"Yes," she says; and though he watches her lips as she speaks, he cannot see them quiver—"Dumphy has told me all; and Aunt Dacie knows, too. Louis, it is terrible—this thing that has come between our lives to part them; but, my darling, we did not know. We must help each other—dearest one—we must help each other with all our hearts, to bear it bravely. And there is another thing I have thought of—we must try and do the best we can for that poor woman—I mean for——"

"My wife?"

"Yes. She must be in great trouble, and great fear—about the trial, I mean. We must—— Oh, Louis, Louis! what is it, dear? What have I said?"

He has turned from her, leaning his arms upon the mantelshelf. His face is hidden in his hands. The bitterness of death seems to have fallen upon him. He sees that not even the edge of the darkest part of the cloud that overshadows them, has touched her consciousness. "We must do this," "We must do that." She thinks, poor soul! that still their pathways shall lie side by side; that still, hand in hand—though differently to what they once had hoped—the work life sets them shall be done.

And how to tell her that indeed the past for them must be but as a story that is told, but as a dream that is past? When he lifts his face from the shelter of his hands; when he looks into her sweet, pale face once more, there is such a desperate, hungry misery of longing in his eyes, that, with a stifled cry, she throws herself upon his breast again, clasping his neck with her soft, fond arms.

"Listen to me, dear," he says, laying one hand upon the head that is brought so low for his dear sake. "Help me, by being very brave, to tell you all the truth. We will do all we can, always—you and I—for all that need help and comfort; but—Mazie—my darling, are you listening to me?"

She lies very still in his embrace. Her eyes—clear, fond, and faithful—look up at him. He can hardly hear her breath come and go, so quietly she lies.

"Yes," he goes on, "I see you are; and I am sure you know what it is I have

to tell you, and how hard it is to tell. Mazie, I must leave you; don't you see, my darling! The life together that we have dreamed of, cannot be any more. Dear one, it would break our hearts! We could not bear it. Hope has been ours, and now we have lost it; we have nothing to look forward to—nothing even to wait and work for. We could not go back to the old time and the old ways when we were only friends; you know we could not. And it is a hard thing to say, but I must say it: the world is cruel—to a woman especially—and I must shield you—oh, my darling!—from all harm." . . .

She does not move or speak, and he, half in wonder, half in fear, hesitates a moment, then goes on:

"It is better for us to face it at once, and help each other to bear it. It is like tearing the heart out of my breast to think of leaving you. And yet—oh, love, love! what is there else for me to do? I dare not take all your young life, and make it barren for my sake. You must be free. I dare not shut out all love from your heart because I cannot always hold you here in my arms like this. There is nothing for it but to—let you go."

There was such desperate, hungry longing in his face as, with something very like a sob, he uttered those last words, that the anguish of seeing him so suffer pierced through the mist that had gathered about Mazie, dulling her to the sense of pain, as a narcotic dulls suffering that is purely physical.

She draws a long, shuddering breath; looks up into his face with wild, despairing eyes that are tearless and wide; clings to him with passionate, fond arms, and breaks into a bitter cry.

"Is there no way—oh, Louis, Louis, is there no way out of all this? Oh, my darling! Can you do nothing? I shall die if I have to give you up!"

One of those waves of self-surrender that rise sometimes in a woman's breast, sweeping all before it, is over Mazie now. In such an hour the praise or blame of men seems a thing not worth weighing in the balance; the smile of heaven, as some fair far-off sky hidden by the storm-clouds of passion and of pain. What matters it, so long as one fond heart does not die of longing—so long as one dear life is not broken and bereft? Even love turns special pleader against itself.

"What if the world turn from me? Is not the man I love more to me than

many worlds? Do I hold myself so great a thing that I hesitate to give my own poor life to purchase the perfect content of his? Am I but a coward after all, that I cannot 'count the world well lost,' for the sake of this dear love of mine?"

Such thoughts as these, and others akin to them, may rise and seethe in a woman's heart, like the terrible, eager wave that has just climbed and crossed the barrier of the sand, and, if the man's arm is not strong enough to guide her through the flood, if the man's hand is not powerful enough to uphold her, then may two lives drift out on to the sea whose shores are desolation and regret.

The woman's eyes are dazzled by one vision—

Only to be
As now awhile, for ever then
Together—I and he!

The man's clearer vision can look farther ahead, and see things more truly, recognising the fact that the joy paid for by such a price as a ruined life, shall turn to dust and ashes in the mouth.

From that wild appeal, uttered by the lips of the woman he so passionately loves, Louis Draycott turns away. He feels as if he cannot meet her haggard, heavy eyes and live. This sudden revolt on her part against fate and life, is an unlooked-for ordeal. For the moment, he cannot face it; and she, seeing him turn from her, thinks that she has made him angry with her—though, Heaven knows, she scarce knows what she says—and tearing herself from his arms, she flings herself face downwards, in an agony of grief, upon the couch that stands beside the window. There lies the nut-brown head, low bowed in humiliation and despair. The leaf-shadows wander over the bright rippling hair like pitying spirit-fingers striving to comfort. There is the distant mellowed sound of church bells far away; the voice of a girl, in the street below, crying—"Roses, fresh roses." Ah me! what mockery it seemed to those from whose lives all the roses were fading, withering, dying!

But Louis Draycott is silent still.

He wages bitter war with himself. He

dare not look upon that precious love of his, lying there desolate and broken down, until he is the victor in that awful struggle.

Thoughts rise up tempting him; longings, passionate and intense, possess his soul. The world is so wide a place. May it not be that somewhere upon the earth there exists a quiet resting-place, where they two, who love each other so dearly, shall be safe—unknown and unmolested?

Yet, even in the moment that this thought flashes through his tortured mind, the conviction runs parallel with it, that neither of them—neither Mazie nor himself—could be happy in such fashion; that, though love might endure, regret would ever keep sad fellowship along with it; that, though the law would free him from the shackles that bind him, and let him call Mazie his wife, he must do all this at the cost of sacrificing his own convictions, his creed, his service in the Master's vineyard.

A moment more he struggles with his own will; then—his face white and drawn, his lips pale, his hands cold and trembling—he is the master of that will, he is the victor in the fight.

A moment more and he is kneeling by Mazie's side, and has drawn her to his breast, has cradled her in his arms, as a mother cradles a suffering child.

The storm of passion has swept over her—has passed—and now she lies back calm and white, and her arm steals about his neck.

"You are right, dear," she says, "as you always are. Only give me a little time, and you will see I shall be quite brave. When you are gone away from me I shall always be very busy—there is so much to do for every one, isn't there? Besides, perhaps, I shall not be so very lonely, after all. I shall have so many sweet, dear thoughts to bear me company; there will be every little thing that has happened ever since I first knew you, to think of, won't there? not once, but over and over again; and there have been so many happy things, I shall have a rich—store—of—memories——"

But here the poor soul falls a-weeping.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

BROWNIE'S PLOT.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "Lucy Carter."

CHAPTER VII. BROWNIE OFFERS ADVICE.

UNTIL now, Clement had taken Brownie and all her charms; her willing helpfulness; her sweet, sisterly affection, very much for granted. She was not his sister, only a cousin so many degrees removed; but he had always bracketed her with Maud. Even during the last fortnight he had not thought of Brownie individually, including her rather with that home band which seemed to be leagued against him. Their opinion of him could hardly be worse than his own; only to think ill of one's self is an inviolable prerogative.

But now, Brownie was one apart from all the world, inasmuch as she had shown sympathy with him. For if he could not respect himself, it was none the less desirable that she should respect him.

If ever woman appeared more than mortal to man, Brownie did to Clement on this desolate afternoon. A month ago he would have declared she was a pretty girl, just as he would have said Maud was a beautiful woman; but, flushed with the excitement of her recent effort, the light of tenderest sympathy in her eyes, she came to him all at once as a revelation.

"I suppose I may draw the blind up now?" she said, as they entered the study together. "Poor uncle!"

"Drop that, Brownie," he exclaimed, "or you'll make a woman of me. When I think of the dear old fellow and remember what a brute I have been—— Brownie, but for my miserable folly, he might have been alive now."

"It was your misfortune, not your fault," she quietly corrected.

"It was my fault. Oh, I can see it all at a glance now. Brownie, what is it makes you think differently from the others?"

"Because I know you so well, Clement. I suppose that is why."

"Does not Maud know me well?"

"Don't speak like that of her," she said, laying her hand gently on his arm. "We can't always think just what we like. If we could, Maud would be the first to believe in you. You see, she cannot understand how it was done——"

"Neither, surely, can you," he exclaimed abruptly.

"Of course, it was Uncle Walter. It rests between you and him. You did not do it; therefore, he did." Nothing could be more beautifully simple than Brownie's logic. "I do not know how he did it," she added; "but I will find out, Clement. I will watch him all day long. Oh, I must, I will, puzzle it out somehow. Only, Clement, I want you to promise me to stay in Middleton."

"Don't ask me that," he said; "anything rather than that. Think, Brownie, how can I live if I do stay here?"

"You do not mean to die if you go away," she retorted. "It is not more difficult to live here than anywhere else."

"Yes, it is. I cannot do here what I may be compelled to do anywhere a thousand miles away. If I remain in England, what is open to me? I will tell you. I might enlist in a cavalry regiment. I should make a fairly good groom. A little practice, and I might become a professional bowler; and there is the crossing opposite Spearing's Bank. I could not stand the place, Brownie. As I go about, one man

turns up his eyes, another turns away his head. It can't be done!"

"But it must be done," she persisted. "You must stay in Middleton just for these six months. Listen, Clement. I know I shall prove that Uncle Walter forged that cheque. I am sure of it. But what will be the use if you are not here to reap the benefit? And you exaggerate the evil. All the people will not be against you. Some will; perhaps most of them; but not all. Then you have your two hundred pounds a year, and—and—there is mine——"

He put this suggestion away impatiently.

"Yes, I have my two hundred pounds a year; but you forget those wretched bills. They will have to be paid. Everybody will come down upon me now. Besides, I wish to pay them. No; I must cut it, Brownie."

"Then, Clement, I am disappointed in you. You are a coward!"

"No one has ever dared tell me so before," he said, firing up. "I don't think it is true now."

"It is. It is true," she continued, excitedly. "If it were a physical danger, and you thought of nothing but escaping from it, would you not be a coward? What is the difference? I know you cannot remain in this house; but you ought to stay in Middleton. Unless you are Henry's partner within six months you will lose your fortune; and even if Henry is convinced of your innocence, and you are at the other side of the world, how can he make you his partner then? You will promise to stay, Clement?"

"I cannot see the good," he replied; but she saw that he was wavering. "Brownie!" he exclaimed, suddenly, "some one has been putting you up to this. Who is it?"

"There is no time to explain now," she said. "They will be wondering where I am. You must let me go now, Clement."

He had caught her hand, and still declined to release her until she had replied to his question, which evidently she would have preferred to leave unanswered.

"Who was it, Brownie? It cannot have been Grayson. Who was it?"

Now she began to speak volubly enough:

"It was Mr. Anderson. I asked his advice. He has been here so often lately, and auntie has taken quite a fancy to him."

"Has some one else taken a fancy to Anderson as well, Brownie?"

"We all like him—so much. He has been awfully kind to me. Now it must really be good-bye, Clement. Remember, I have your promise to stay; and I, for my part, will devote the next six months of my life to my brother's service."

As he made his way to the hotel through the driving rain, he went again over every word she had uttered. He had not given his promise; she had taken it for granted.

There seemed many reasons why he should quit Middleton; only one why he should stay. He had lived under the same roof which had sheltered Brownie for twelve years; they had been playmates as children, firm friends upon attaining maturer years. Yet, only to-day, when Fate decreed that they must part, had he awakened to a sense of her merit. It was this awakening which formed the solitary reason for staying where he was—where Brownie would be also.

She believed in him. Well, the past was dead; but if his conduct in the future could justify her faith, then it should indeed be justified. We all know how easy it is to make good resolutions.

He wished she had not dragged in that word brother, and that Anderson had not been admitted to her confidence. He had been almost glad that she was the only one to side with him; it seemed to place him apart with her; they were two by themselves. But now Anderson had come between.

The first thing for Clement to do was to change his quarters, from the "Black Bull" to more economical private apartments. He had paid away all those bank-notes on the day after he had shown them to Brownie; and he sat this evening staring at his hotel bill, trying to realise how small a sum remained to carry on the battle, when who should appear but Anderson himself.

To the doctor's apology for intruding upon the evening of such a day, Clement did not warmly respond.

"I was sent for by Mrs. Northcott this evening," Anderson explained, "and I had a short conversation with your cousin. You must look upon me as her ambassador."

"Well?" said Clement, curtly.

"She is anxious that you shall put in an appearance at the Works to-morrow morning."

"To subject myself to Grayson's insults," cried Clement.

"That is as it may be. I merely give you my message. But if you had shown a disposition to receive it in a friendly spirit, I think I could show cause why the advice should be acted upon."

"I beg your pardon, Anderson; you must forgive me. I am going off my head, I think. Fire away."

Following Brownie's argument, Anderson spared no pains to convince his hearer.

"Your future depends upon Grayson," he concluded. "Grayson, like everybody else, is affected by public opinion. You have not been discharged from the office. Go there as though you were not aware of any reason for absenting yourself. Run away, humble yourself, and you are done for; put on a bold face, and you will live down your—the evil report. Depend upon this; if Grayson finds you at your post to-morrow, he will begin to question—to wonder. I would strongly urge you to go."

"Anderson," exclaimed Clement, "I can't tell you what it is to speak to a man who does not think me utterly depraved."

"Utterly depraved! Heaven forbid!" said the doctor, as he rose to go. "Still, Northcott, I ought in honesty to remind you that I am merely your cousin's envoy."

Clement drew back the hand he had extended towards Anderson, his face flushing angrily. Nevertheless, sorely against his will, but because it was Brownie's wish, he did set forth to High Wood directly after breakfast on the morrow.

What a morning it was! The earth was fragrant as she dried herself in the glorious sunshine, like some beautiful nymph of fable. The trees and hedges were bursting with life, and everything from heaven above to the earth beneath seemed to be working together in one grand harmony.

Clement took his place in Henry Grayson's room to await the principal's arrival. For once Henry was startled from his self-possession.

"You are the last person I expected to see here!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I am afraid I have been a little irregular lately," was the cool response.

"Look here, Northcott, this sort of thing is all very well, but the sooner you

and I understand one another the better. Of course, you can't stay here."

Having consented to play this part, Clement determined to carry it off to the best of his ability. So, thrusting his hands in his pockets, he deliberately asked:

"Why not?"

"Because I decline to employ a man whose character will not bear inspection. That is why not."

"You had better be careful!" thundered Clement, taking his hands from his pockets, and cool no longer. "You may have heard certain rumours——"

"Rumours! Do you think because Spearing spared you, and, for your father's sake, did not compel you to stand in the dock like a felon—do you think because of this you can ride the high horse over me? Bah, man! don't double your fists; you do not frighten me. You know the responsibility that rests upon me. The oftener you cross my path, the more difficult you will make it to perform that duty should the occasion arise."

"It seems that you have performed it already. You condemned me before you became my judge," retorted Clement.

"How could it be otherwise?" Grayson demanded. "Ask any man, woman, or child in Middleton—you cannot bring me one who thinks you are an honest man."

"By Heaven, you are wrong there," cried Clement, striding forward and grasping Grayson's collar.

His adversary was but a child in his hands; Clement could do what he pleased with him. But all at once he realised the blessed truth of his own words. There was one who believed in him yet. His hands fell to his side, and without another word he walked out of the room.

Thus did he follow Brownie's advice to take his usual place at the Works. Whether or not he had sown the seeds of doubt in Henry Grayson's mind, this is certain—he had added to his prejudice, and increased his aversion.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MEETING AND A PARTING.

BROWNIE'S position at Eastwood had become somewhat difficult, inasmuch as her alliance with Clement necessarily implied a state of warfare against Mr. Litton.

A few weeks after Mr. Northcott's funeral, Henry Grayson ventured to put in an appearance one afternoon, when the conversation soon turned upon Clement's continued presence in the town.

"He might just as well have stayed in this house," said Mrs. Northcott. "I must tell you that my dear brother has been generous enough to forgive Clement. Few men would have done that. I consider it shows a large mind, Henry."

"But don't you think?" asked Brownie, with the most ingenuous air in the world, "don't you think that those who have travelled a great deal—like Uncle Walter, you know—always have large minds? You never tell us about all the places you have seen, Uncle Walter. Fancy, Henry, Uncle Walter had not been to England for ten years. Now, I wonder how often you wrote to auntie—very often I suppose."

"Your uncle was never a good correspondent," said Mrs. Northcott, amiably.

"You forget, Mary," he answered, "you forget how many letters were lost. Wrecks and that sort of thing, Grayson. I wrote often enough."

"I wish you would get me some more roses, Margaret," said Mrs. Northcott; "perhaps Henry will help you."

"Wait whilst I unchain Lion," said Brownie, demurely, as Henry followed her through the open window.

"I wonder Clement did not take his dog with him," responded Grayson.

"He is my dog now," was the answer; accompanied by so much fondling of the St. Bernard, that Henry's dislike was turned to envy.

"Margaret," he said, looking down spitefully at the huge animal, who would persist in walking between them, "how is it that you think differently from every one else about Clement?"

"Surely you are not sorry that just one person is able to think well of him," she answered; and her tone warned Henry to avoid such dangerous ground for the present.

When they returned to the drawing-room, Mr. Litton was no longer there.

"I wish I had known Uncle Walter had gone," quoth Brownie, "I need not have chained Lion."

"Then his highness does not approve of your uncle?" suggested Henry.

"Oh, no," she answered cheerfully. "Of course Lion hates all Clement's enemies."

Mrs. Northcott was unusually severe with Brownie upon hearing this, while to Maud, her cousin's conduct was incomprehensible. Brownie seemed to be attempting the difficult task of running with the hare and hunting with the hound. As a rule,

her treatment of Mr. Litton was all that his fond sister could wish, and better than he himself had anticipated. Yet at times she would indulge in covert sarcasms or candid expressions of enmity, which were trying to every member of the family.

Anderson was still in daily attendance on Mrs. Northcott, and on the Wednesday after Henry Grayson's visit, she requested him to interview Brownie.

"Your aunt tells me you are not well," he began; "she has asked me to prescribe for you."

But Brownie objected. It was a mere headache; it was nothing at all—a cold—she was quite well. fj

He did not press the matter—as Dr. Stanhope would have done—but contented himself with persuading her to spend more time out of doors.

"Well," said Maud, "you are bound to go to Mrs. Clow's to-morrow. She lives at Barker's Cottages, you know, Mr. Anderson, and Brownie goes to read to her every Thursday. She is stone deaf; but Brownie carries a bag as well as a Bible. Mrs. Clow has been neglected lately. You must go to-morrow, Brownie, and I will walk with you."

Now, as the doctor was bidding Maud good-bye, he was careful to enquire at what hour Brownie usually started upon her mission.

"At three o'clock," answered Maud. "You don't think the sun will be too hot for her, do you?"

Nothing was farther from his thoughts, as, indeed, Maud guessed easily enough, when, before they had gone many yards on their way the next afternoon, she saw Mr. Anderson himself coming towards them.

"He evidently means to see that his prescription is properly carried out," she said; and when Anderson turned to accompany them, devoting all his attention to Brownie, Maud began to feel sincerely sorry for Henry Grayson.

At Barker's Cottages Brownie left the others, staying to read to deaf Mrs. Clow for one hour by the clock. Upon stepping into the fresh air once more, the first person she saw was Clement.

"I hope—I hope you don't mind," he said, with a hesitation which was perfectly new to him. "I came last week, and the week before as well; the third time proves lucky."

"You hope I don't mind, Clement! Fancy your talking such nonsense! Of course, I am very pleased."

He himself hardly knew why he had apologised; only that whilst she was infinitely dearer to him than ever, she yet seemed far less near than in the old days before he had partaken of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

While she replied to his enquiries concerning those at home, he led the way to a path across the fields. The grass was down; busy haymakers tossed it about in a fashion that was apparently aimless; the lark singing overhead charmed away every vestige of a cloud.

"This is not the nearest way, Clement."

"That depends upon your destination. Don't they say that all roads lead to heaven? At any rate, this particular one often leads to church. It is the lover's walk, you know, Brownie."

"But I don't want to go to church, Clement."

"Not now. But the time may come, you know. Well, to go from one extreme to another—from church to—how is our precious uncle going along?"

"Oh, his arm is much better. Mr. Anderson is quite astonished that it heals so rapidly. Of course, uncle still wears the sling. I have one little piece of news for you. He has had a visitor."

"A visitor? I thought he had no friends in this hemisphere!"

"So did we all. Auntie was very much surprised. She asked him to stay the night, and he did. We were very glad when the morning came—Maud and I."

"You did not like him?" enquired Clement.

"Oh, no! You could not call him a gentleman, you know. Uncle says he is his partner; I don't know in what. But it is important, Clement. Uncle Walter was supposed to know nobody at all. If he had a confederate, the mystery of the forgery is solved at once."

"I don't like the whole business, Brownie," said Clement, as she stooped to pick a piece of meadow-orchis from a haycock. "You are turning yourself into a kind of amateur detective, and the occupation is degrading. The man is a scoundrel; you ought to have nothing to do with him."

"You do not dislike it more than I do," she answered, opening wide her eyes at this consideration from one so thoughtless as Clement; "but you forget that I am not acting solely for my own pleasure."

"No, I don't forget," he said, "I know that you are acting for mine. "But," he

added, warmly, "I am not worth it, and nobody knows better than myself how useless it is. What am I that you should suffer on my account?"

"You are my brother," she answered, dropping her eyes. "I am doing no more than a sister ought to do. I have half won a convert already."

"So you still discuss me with Anderson," exclaimed Clement, not doubting for a moment to whom she referred.

"There is no one else, Clement."

"Not Maud?" he suggested.

"Yes," she said, hesitatingly; "but it is so difficult to explain—to you. You see, Maud's opinions are very pronounced. She would do anything in the wide world to help you; only she thinks—she can't help thinking—"

"Spare yourself, Brownie; I know all about it. She thinks her brother a scoundrel; and, by Heaven, she is not far wrong! But, for that matter, Anderson's opinion is much the same."

"Ah, but Mr. Anderson himself is so different from everybody else," she said, naively; "he tries to put himself in one's place; to reason from my standpoint. That makes such a difference; and if he could help us, I am sure he would."

"I would rather be without his help for my part," Clement declared; and by this time they were close to the lane again. To avoid a somewhat awkward stile, Brownie made for a gap in the hedge hard by; but, before she could reach it, Clement caught her hand.

"Promise me not to bother about this business of mine any further," he cried, earnestly.

"You forget how much depends upon my interference," she expostulated; "your good name, your honour—"

"My name is already a bad one; as for my honour, nobody can smirch it or clear it but myself. Brownie, I swear I do not value the money a rap. There is only one thing in the world that I prize—"

She disengaged her hand, and, with a nervous little laugh, sprang from the meadow down to the lane a foot or two beneath. A horse was pulled up sharply, only just in time, or its hoofs would have been upon her. The lady who rode it bowed gaily to Clement, and continued her way.

"Don't you think you women are rather cool to Mrs. Oliver?" said Clement, as Brownie brushed the dust from her gloves.

"Don't you think you men make up for us?" she laughed. "You know I have

not been introduced, Clement; and, for that matter, I am not anxious to be. There is Maud," she added, as his sister came into view.

"Mr. Anderson was just asking after you, Clement," said Maud, anxious to find a safe topic.

"Did you meet him down the town, then?" enquired Clement.

"How mysterious you are, Brownie," she laughed, somewhat constrainedly; "especially considering the manner in which he devotes himself to you."

"I must say good-bye," said Clement, coming to a standstill in the middle of the lane; and without another word, or even a shake of the hand, he turned abruptly and retraced his steps.

He believed that Brownie had refrained from mentioning her meeting with Anderson of set purpose. It was annoying to think that she should wish to hide anything from him; still more annoying to know that it was the discussion of his own interests which drew Brownie and the doctor together; that he formed a link between them, which bade fair to be a very lasting one.

He walked away from her this afternoon, telling himself that if she could never be more to him than a sister—and she had harped so often upon this string of late—he would rather, far rather, that she had gone against him with the rest.

And, at the best, how dared he attempt to win her love! Honour seemed to forbid its acceptance, even if it had been laid at his feet—a very unlikely contingency.

"So your charming cousin has forsaken you, Mr. Northcott."

It was Mrs. Oliver, returning from her ride, who spoke. She looked deliciously cool this glowing afternoon; her light-grey habit, short enough to expose two or three inches of a small brown boot, her white straw hat, suited her to perfection—a small fairy-queen of a woman, very pleasant to look upon.

"We met my sister," he answered, simply.

Mrs. Oliver turned her violet eyes upon him with a tantalising expression of mock sympathy.

"Oh," she laughed, perhaps a little too loudly, and showing her even white teeth rather too freely, "that is a quite sufficient reason. Well, if I may say so without earning your lasting hatred, I am rather pleased. I have been looking for an opportunity to speak to you. I want to

know when you will come up to the Nook to dine. Captain Oliver will be so pleased."

Clement was in a state of mind to appreciate the slightest overture of friendship. He had never yet visited the Olivers, and he was conscious that Brownie would be better pleased if he refrained from doing so now.

"It is awfully kind of you," he answered. "I will come whenever you like. My engagements are not particularly numerous just now."

"Then suppose we say Tuesday," she said, dropping the reins to adjust a tress of her yellow hair, which none but herself could have known to be awry.

"I shall be delighted," answered Clement, regarding her with admiration in spite of himself; and, with a nod and a smile, she cantered away.

SHILLINGBURY SKETCHES.

VANISHING TYPES.

IN the days before astronomy was taught in elementary schools, nurses would sometimes, in looking up at the spacious firmament, inform their young charges that a star vanished, and another one came to sight, every minute. Whether there ever was the least groundwork for this teaching, I cannot say; but it is abundantly clear to me that many types in the sphere of humanity, which have always seemed as stable and persistent as the heavenly bodies, are changing every day, every hour, and even every minute. The observer, as soon as he has grasped the fact that the order of things is continually changing, and proceeds to record his discovery, usually comes to the conclusion that the world, as he sees it, is rocking along at a furious rate towards an abyss of deterioration, and that types are being transformed at a rate hitherto unknown. As I sat in the railway-carriage, on my way back to town after my autumn holiday in my native country, I felt the spirit of prophecy strong upon me, and I was prepared to pour forth my lamentations in due form over the terrible havoc that time was making on every side, and I was fully assured that the message I had to deliver to the world was a perfectly new one.

The type—the human type, that is—which comes to be quoted as representative, is usually the idealisation of the strongest and roughest individuals of a

given class. Thus my ideal farm-labourer, whom I am going to place in the forefront of my gallery of extinct specimens, will be fashioned from the memory of extremes rather than of the average. A portrait-painter, it is admitted, can only present his sitter in one of the many moods which the least variable of us put on in the course of a single day; consequently, he is allowed to choose the most striking and most interesting—in other words, the most favourable—of these moods; and there is no reason why a writer should not claim a like privilege.

I am sure that at no time could a set of labourers like Samuel Dingley have been found working on one farm; I much doubt whether one could have been met in every village. Samuel was a person no one could forget in a hurry after once having met him; and to me his personality stands out vividly enough after the lapse of thirty years and more. There is something to grasp in treating of him, whereas the dull souls who toiled by his side have dropped, unnoticed, into the village churchyard, and have left no sign. John Lee was a farm-labourer, so was James Long; and, having said so much about them, one has said all. The pen of the transatlantic novelist is reputed to have the power of transfiguring the commonplace, and clothing it with interest. It certainly covers a vast superficial area of paper in the attempt, and perhaps it might, if it were to try, make Adam Bedes and Peggottys out of the John and James aforesaid. It may indeed have done as much already; but I can only say I have not yet come across the volume in which this task has been achieved.

Samuel Dingley is alive yet; but he was an old man to all appearance when I first saw him. He was then working for old Mr. Suttaby of Hedgelands, who had been his employer, with one or two intervals, for the last forty years. Mr. Suttaby always came to Shillingbury church on Sunday mornings, and during my holidays he would very often carry me off, nothing loth, to spend the rest of the day, and sometimes for a longer visit, at the farm. Then it was that I first became acquainted with Samuel, who would be chopping turnips for Mr. Suttaby's fat bullocks, in spite of the day being Sunday. I well remember the shock I felt the first time I saw Samuel hard at work just as if it had been Monday—I, too, having listened only a few hours before to the denunciations of

the decalogue against Sabbath-breaking—but in answer to my questions on the subject, and to quiet any scruples, Mr. Suttaby tempered the severity of the law by an infusion of equity in the form of a remark that if the bullocks weren't fed there would be no roast beef for dinner. Mr. Suttaby was churchwarden, and always joined in the responses in a loud voice, so I concluded that he must be right in this doctrine of his, and that Moses must have had certain mental reservations when he published the fourth commandment. But bullock-feeding was only a Sunday occupation of Samuel's. On week days he was always to be found all by himself in a solitary field-barn, threshing out with a flail the barley which had been carted into it at the last harvest; and whenever my visit happened to be prolonged beyond Sunday, I always made my way thither. Long before arriving at the barn I could hear the stroke of Samuel's flail as it descended upon the rustling row of barley. The barn was an enormous one; and when it was full up to the rafters it seemed as if it would take him all his lifetime to beat out the kernels from the vast mass of straw with his puny wooden flail. It would have been hard to find a more delightful play-place than this barn made when it was in course of being emptied of its clean, fragrant barley. To get it out conveniently Samuel would cut the mass into steep precipices; and it was a fearful joy to jump or slide down these on to the springy, elastic bit of stack left beneath. Then it was possible to climb up amongst the spars and rafters of the old barn-roof; and often, in the spring, prey, rare and strange, would reward our climb. Sparrows' eggs were almost too common to take; but sometimes we came upon starlings' and jackdaws'. My companion at such times would be a small boy named Ebenezer, a grandson of Samuel Dingley. Happy Ebenezer! He grew up in a sort of civilised savagery, unweaned by the terrors of the school-attendance officer, or of the fourth standard. Ebenezer once confided to me that, at a certain period of his life, he had known his letters; but that he wasn't sure if he could go through them now. I have since then come across similar results in past pupils of schools dominated by certificated teachers, and visited every year by Her Majesty's Inspector.

Ebenezer and I would spend most of our time in "playing at robbers." A cave

would be formed, and in this I, the robber, would lurk, waiting till Ebenezer, the traveller, should pass by. Then I would dart forth, and after dispossessing him of all his wealth—generally consisting of a marble and a half-eaten apple—would proceed to put him to death with all the refinements of torture commonly practised by the bravo of romance. As a reward I would tell Ebenezer, after he had been restored to life, all the tales of brigandage and highway robbery I could remember; for though slow at his letters, he had the keenest appetite for fiction. I have lost sight of Ebenezer for many years, and I trust he has never taken to the road or to burglary as a profession. I once heard of his appearance before the Shillingbury Bench on a charge of poaching, and I was strongly moved to pay the fine and costs, having an uneasy feeling that in knocking over the hare in question he may have been merely translating into action the principles I had instilled into his mind during my youthful story-telling.

But delightful as my games with Ebenezer were, I found a much keener pleasure in listening to Samuel's discourse, while he would be eating his frugal dinner during the noontide hour. I was very young then; but I had sense enough to see that Samuel's view of life as it lay around him, and of the world in general, was very different from that of his fellow-toilers; and that if he could have got his foot upon the first rung of the ladder, he would not have gone on all his life threshing barley with a flail, at a remuneration of twelve shillings a week.

Samuel was a sort of portent amongst the agricultural labourers of his day—by a trifling liberty of expression he might have been called a Saul, instead of a Samuel, amongst the prophets—for he could read, and write, and cypher. His reading was of that laborious style which makes it necessary to repeat every word with the lips in a hoarse whisper; but Samuel's appetite for knowledge was keen, and he took in more ideas from printed words than many more accomplished students. Such ideas as he had mastered revealed to him, in dim fashion, the composition of the social mass of which he was an atom; and, after a little, he began to speculate as to how it had been gathered together, and whether it was irrevocably written in the book of fate that it must rest as he found it so long as the world should endure. Poor

Samuel's intellectual eyesight was not very strong as yet.

"Well, the world is a rum place, and life is a rum go," was a favourite reflection of his at the close of a speech when the notions that were seething in his brain failed to find adequate expression in his halting words.

This remark has not special claim to originality. Many of us, I dare say, have felt inclined to use it, or words of similar purport, when the mystery of existence has been more than usually dark and perplexing; but it has a virtue which is not always found in original utterances. It is strictly and literally true. Life is a "rum go," for most of us; and Samuel had made this discovery. He had also ventured to controvert *Candide's* view, and to maintain that this world is not the best possible of all worlds; but he had got very little beyond the negative stage. He might now and then have perceived faint visions of a good time coming for himself and his fellows; but his brain had not gathered sufficient strength to figure how this good time was to be brought about, or to conceive the necessity for clearing the ground to make room for a new social edifice.

Samuel was born before his time. The forest of privilege grew rank and impenetrable around him, and the sharp axe of the ballot-protected suffrage had not been put into his hand. Ebenezer, his grandson, if he be alive, stands in a very different position, and, if he reads the journals written for him and his class, and listens to the spoken words of the village politician of the new school, is probably quite ready to assent to more drastic reforms than ever my old friend Samuel dreamt of.

From the influence of my home surroundings, and from every word I had ever read or listened to, my bent of mind was, even at the early age of twelve, thoroughly set in the direction of law, and order, and authority; and some of Samuel's utterances seemed to me to be very terrible indeed. It sounded altogether unreasonable that, in a question between rich and poor, the latter could possibly have right on their side; yet Samuel maintained stoutly that they had it in nine cases out of ten. The agricultural labourer in those days would as soon have thought of striking as of putting on two clean shirts a week; but there now and then came to us in Shillingbury—accompanied generally with a rise in the price of coal—rumours of strikes,

and sometimes of riot and bloodshed in those vague and distant regions known as "the North," and "the Shires."

I used to wonder and feel indignant that the men should be so wicked and foolish as to refuse to work for the wages offered to them; and I thought that Samuel must have taken leave of his senses, when he affirmed, one day, that the men were just as right to get the highest possible wages for their labour as the masters were to sell their coal at the best price in the market. Then he showed me the source of these revolutionary doctrines—a collection of tracts, bought, no doubt, from some incendiary tinker, and said I might read them, if I would take care to put them out of sight in case Mr. Suttaby should look in at the barn-door.

There I read, amongst other astounding and monstrous statements, that the land belonged to the people who tilled it, and not to men like Sir Thomas Kedg-bury and Mr. Winsor; that the French people were quite right in cutting off the heads of the King and Queen; and that if other Kings and Queens were served in the same fashion the world would be a better place for the people who laboured therein. There was very faint condemnation of rick-burning and open approval of machine-breaking; but on these two latter points the writer failed to win Samuel's approval.

"Heaven ha' sent us the corn to eat, and them as set fire to it are fools and rogues as well; and, about the troshin' machines—if they as went about the country a-breakin' on 'em had known as much about flail troshin' as I do, they'd ha' been glad as somebody had been clever enough to invent a machine to do the work for 'em."

Mr. Suttaby was a hard man, and unsympathetic to his labourers; but he must have liked Samuel Dingley, for he would often sit on the barn-stool and hold converse with him by the hour together. I noticed that on these occasions Samuel was careful not to bring out the more startling of his articles of belief. This condescension on Mr. Suttaby's part was all the more remarkable from the fact that Samuel was a Primitive Methodist, and this sect Mr. Suttaby hated as he hated Free Trade and couch-grass. Samuel, when he was about forty years of age, had "got religion" very powerfully, having been converted at a camp-meeting held on Padsey Heath. This religion was made up of a collection

of Calvinistic beliefs so terrible that, when he expounded it to me, I could not repress a shudder at the fate which seemed inevitable for me, and wished that I had never been born.

But our talk, as a rule, had very little to do with theology. Samuel evidently held the belief that, the greater the sinner, the greater would be the saint; and he would give me long descriptions of his doings in his unregenerate days, before he had been converted; and, according to these narrations, he certainly owed much to good fortune that he did not spend the best part of his early manhood in prison. I have since suspected that Samuel, with a pardonable vanity, and a wish to exhibit his present worth by bringing up the past in its darkest aspect to heighten the contrast, made himself out to be much worse than he really was. He worked, when he was a young man, for a cousin of Mr. Suttaby, who held a farm lying in a sea-coast village on the other side of the county, the salt marshes adjacent to which were a favourite haunt of certain fishing-boats, belonging to a neighbouring port, which came thither for the purpose of landing spirit-kegs taken on board from the Dutchmen, out at sea. In these days Samuel was an active shore auxiliary of the smuggling fishermen; and I was never tired of hearing how, on dark nights, his master's horses and carts would be requisitioned and stationed at the end of a lane leading down to the salt marshes, to await the arrival of the boat which, after dodging the coastguardsmen, would slip up the creek with a score or two of kegs of Schiedam in tow; how the master would see, plainly enough, when he made his morning round, that his horses had been out in the night, but would cease complaining and say no more when he caught sight of the end of a cask, half-concealed under the straw in a corner of the stable; and how, after a successful run, nearly all the men, and a good proportion of the women of the parish would be drunk, and the whole place a hell of debauchery, as long as the spirit lasted. Next, in due season, when the woods would be full of game, Samuel and a chosen band would sally forth and make a clean sweep of the Squire's pheasants before the great battue of the year. There were three or four pitched battles fought with the keepers; and, after a bit, by reason of plentiful repetition, I got to know all the details of these as well as Samuel himself. There

was one in which Mr. Winsor's head-keeper got beaten about the head so badly that he never recovered, and went about a hopeless imbecile for the rest of his days ; and another in which Jim Warracker, one of the leading poachers, was shot in the thigh, and would have bled to death if Samuel hadn't bound up the wound with a bit of his own shirt.

"Ah, they was bad goin's on in them days, they was," Samuel said ; "but as I was a-readin' in one o' them tracts as I lent you t' other day, 'twas all the fault o' the law, and not o' the poor chaps as took it into their heads as they'd like a drop o' summat warm of a cold night, or a taste of a hare as was made for them just as much as for Squire Winsor. If 't hadn't been for the law, they wouldn't ha' got into no mischief."

It was, I well remember, a startling revelation for me to hear it affirmed that the law could possibly be in the wrong, or that anybody who broke it might be a martyr, and not a criminal. My notions of public morality were very crude in those days ; but lately I have often recalled to mind Samuel's quaint exposition of his revolutionary position in ethics, and wondered whether any of the great contemporary political leaders may have sat in their youth at the feet of teachers of a like tone of thought. Bearing in mind how often one hears repeated the doctrine that, if obedience to a particular law offends one's conscience, one has only to break it, it seems as if certain of these must have gone through a training like mine, and have laid to heart its maxims more thoroughly than I did. At other times I invert the position, and wonder how it is that, having listened in my tender years to such doctrines, I have failed to become a political leader.

In his meditations on the affairs of this present world, Samuel Dingley, as I have already remarked, did not get far beyond the discovery that things were in a queer tangle, and that he was not born to set them right ; for, having come to the conclusion that the world was a "rum place," and life a "rum go," he made no effort to bring this world more into the likeness of what he dimly perceived an ideal society ought to be. But with the affairs of the world to come it was quite another matter. The world around him was a nut too hard for him to crack, an oyster which no sword of his could open. The squire, and the parson, and the policeman stood guarding all the gates of the fortress which must

first be overthrown ; and, with a despairing sense of his impotence, he abandoned this task to those who should come after him, and set to work to settle his relations with the unseen world to his own satisfaction. Samuel, like most other people, found it vastly more easy to build airy castles than castles of brick and stone. His valour recoiled from an encounter with "the powers that be" here below ; but in his spiritual conflict he made short work of those invincible foes who, since John Bunyan's time, have been reported to lay in wait on all sides to trip up the feet of the earthly pilgrim bound for the celestial city, and he soon brought himself to a comfortable state of final assurance ; a state no doubt all the more full of consolation for him from the fact that it involved an article of belief, to the effect that the rich man would find it a hard matter to attain those blessings which Samuel Dingley held virtually within his grasp.

Samuel's flail has long ceased to beat, and his heart also, and he is gone to solve the great mystery. I did not leave the district last autumn without walking out to Hedgelands and paying a visit to the old barn where I had spent so many happy hours. The field-road leading to it was deeply rutted ; but the ruts looked like the ruts of many years ago. The whole place had a deserted air. Several tiles were gone from the roof, and the grass was growing green, and thistles and docks rearing their unlovely foliage before the doors. I looked in at the broken wicket, and found that it was used as a storehouse for broken implements and other débris of the farm.

Barns have little use in modern agriculture, and in another generation or two it will probably have fallen to ruin ; and, if the ivy and other kindly forces of Nature do their work well, it will be just as fair to look upon as half the ruins that people go miles to see. To me there was a deeper pathos about its incipient decay. It was as the tomb of an old friend—the grave of those happy times when I had romped with Ebenezer, or sat listening to his grandfather's discourse.

But, after all, the men who had toiled beneath its roof for the last century and more, belonged to a type which is now fast becoming as extinct as the bustard which used to roam wild over the adjacent heaths ; so, perhaps, it was only meet that the old barn should follow them into ruin and oblivion.

TRIOLETS.

I.

GOLDEN daffodils I bring,
Love, from out the fields to-day.
As a pledge of coming Spring,
Golden daffodils I bring,
Which did weary Winter fling
Earthwards as he went his way.
Golden daffodils I bring,
Love, from out the fields to-day.

II.

Love is kindest in Spring,
So all sweetest singers say.
Is it true, love, this they sing—
Love is kindest in Spring?
Tell me, you, for whom I bring
Proof that Spring is born to-day.
Is love kindest in Spring,
As all wisest poets say?

A PRODIGAL.

A PICTURE FROM THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR.

"LET her get down and walk, the baggage! Why should she ride, day after day, while we have to tramp it on foot, and carry the babies and the bundles into the bargain? And all, forsooth, because she has a gold ring on her finger! Much that ring was worth at Jankow!"

"Hold thy prating tongue, and have a care to thyself! Black Rudolph was not always so tender to the women as he is since Jankow; and thou'dst best not rouse him."

A long cavalcade winds slowly up the hilly road. Some leagues to westward behind it still rises the smoke from the sacked and plundered village. At the hill's foot lies an outlying homestead—this morning peaceful, plenteous, and happy; now deserted, ruined. In the low western sky—marking their track of pillage—hangs the red evening sun, slowly sinking in a maze of glorious hues; while through the swaying branches of the pine-trees, which border the roadside, his crimson and golden gleams shine like fire and blood upon the tarnished helmets and cuirasses of the mounted free-lancers.

There is but little order in the wild procession: the officers on horseback, the men in broken companies singing wild songs in memory of their victories; behind, the waggons piled high with corn which, this morning, stood in some thrifty stackyard, or with the household goods and provisions snatched ruthlessly from terrified and unoffending villagers. Round these last trudge the women, to whose skirts cling

barefoot little children, and two or three captive girls weeping bitterly for their lost homes and murdered kinsfolk. And, last of all—apart, a few paces from the rest, one hand upon the bridle of his horse, the other clutching at his blade—a man walks alone, stern and silent. He has heard all, yet only his grim silence and the involuntary handling of his weapon mark his smouldering wrath, his resolve to postpone vengeance for the present. For, behind him in the waggon, tenderly cared for, and shielded as far as possible from the rude sights around, lies the only being who, since his boyhood, has awakened softer feelings in his heart, one who lies dying, amid the horrors of a free-lance camp, without one other hand to tend or care for her, one other heart to mourn her loss.

This is Black Rudolph; before Jankow the wildest, wickedest, most ruthless of all that daredevil crew, and she is his wife. Ah! in that word lies all her desolation, her loneliness; nothing in all the world could have so surely and so utterly cut her off from every womanly care, and tenderness, and comfort.

To these angry, clamorous women, tired out with a long day of pillage, and the burden of a booty which but this morning seemed the most coveted treasure upon earth, it is an intolerable offence that Rudolph's wife should ride safe and easy—blest in so strong and tender a protector—while they must keep the road.

Rudolph's ominous scowl is answered by looks as black; fierce taunts arise again, until, at some word flung with more angry daring than the rest, the free-lance makes a swift and furious stride towards the speaker.

Then, like the bursting of a mill-dam, the smouldering fury of the whole camp breaks out; there is a short and angry altercation—blows—and the deep and sudden silence of surprise and fear.

The Captain of the band rides back, and furiously demands the cause of all this brawling. Half fearful, terrified at their own prowess—as a venturesome hunter gazes afar off at the dying lion—the free-lances fall back, and point in silence to the fainting, fallen figure of their sometime comrade.

Rudolph has sunk upon the bank which skirts the road, his head falls on his breast beside the clutching hands which strive to close his death-wound.

"Is't fatal?" coolly says the Captain.

Yes; Black Rudolph has got his death.

"March on!" the Captain says.

They move. A dying soldier more or less—a good companion gone—what matter now! They move; but as the heavy waggon stirs again, Black Rudolph struggles once more to his feet, and furiously calls on them to leave his wife.

"Put the wench down," the Captain sneers; and the band goes on its way, regardless, save in coarsest mockery, of the two helpless, dying fellow-creatures left alone amidst the coming night.

Far up the winding slope of the pine-clad hill, the man can watch them as he turns after them. Even as they slowly disappear beyond its shelving brow, sounds from the band are borne again to him upon the evening breeze.

The laughter and wild songs; the distant, angry grumbling of those who march last; the furious oaths of the leader, sound somewhat strange in the quiet, darkening country, and through that shadow which is falling heavy on him now. He raises his hand after them as they pass, and curses them with the bitterness of unforgiving death. So much for man's reward! The old companions whom he has been with for years, the Captain he has served faithfully through all his changing fortunes, can turn from him with scorn in this his greatest hour of need, without a glance of kindness and regret. They have left him alone, wounded, helpless, dying! There is more than the bitterness of mere death in the thought! This is his gain, his recompense for all that he gave up years ago when he joined that lawless company.

He slowly turns from the last sound of their retreating footsteps, and, with such feeble strength as he can muster, draws his wife's head upon his knees. It is all he can do for her now—he who would have—who has—protected her with his life!

How carefully, how tenderly, he raises her, though it is agony for him to move; while the name, which for years he has not spoken, save in coarsest mockery, save in curses on his faithless friends, rises up in prayer as he gazes on his wife.

Slowly the low, red sun sinks over the darkening landscape, its warmth and light lingeringly dying, as the strength of his life and manhood are dying in him. The last bright tints fade from fiery red and orange into dull crimson, dim magenta, dusky purple, like the last glowing embers

of some stupendous fire; deep silence reigns over the wide landscape—only the night-breeze stirs amid the pine-trees. He sees the day fade with the apathy of utter hopelessness—the hopelessness of despair. Death is coming with the darkness and the night.

He does not fear death; far, far too familiar is it to him for him to fear it. He has looked at it, nor shrunk from it, for many years, and now it has come to him—as he knew it would—suddenly, with swift, unerring certainty. He could welcome it, and die as a free-lance should—carelessly, bravely, desperately—if it were not for her. Ah! there is an unbearable agony in the thought that he is leaving her; an anguish of very helplessness in the remembrance that his death deprives her of her only protector—the only one who loves her. Tears, that have been strangers to his eyes for more than twenty years, are in them now as he gazes on his wife. It is his agony of pain; his growing weakness; his helpless, hopeless despair; the misery of parting with his unprotected darling, which have wrung them from him—ay, and something more than these!

As he clasps her poor, cold fingers in his own, he neither sees nor hears. His thoughts have wandered far over years that are dead and gone to scenes which, until three years ago, he had never recalled. The life of recent years falls from him—the reckless joy of its dangers, and its pleasures, and its triumphs—and scenes from holier, happier days rise up before his dying mind. He is a boy again—sole son of honest peasant parents—bold, light-hearted, loving, proud of his position as their future prop and stay.

It has grown dusk around him; but he seems to stand once again in the bright sunshine of that summer's morning twenty years ago, when they were all around him and he took his last farewell. He is again the brave, frank young soldier, eager to serve his country and defend the right. Again he is setting out in life, with all the glory and honour of his calling to be won. What a proud embrace his father gives him! How his mother drives back her tears as she bids Heaven bless him! What prayers are said for the absent lad; what good counsel does he carry with him; and oh! what hopes, what resolutions, what fair dreams, never to be fulfilled!

And yet another scene—that night at Jankow—twenty years after. All the horror, the cruel glory, the mad pleasure

of that night! Surely now the fierce glare of flames illumines the pine forest with a glow redder than the departed sun? Is not that fair young girl still clinging to his arm, with faith even in her wildest terror, and praying him to save her?

Ah, that was the turning point of his mad career—that trust in him who had thrown away his soul; in him, from whom even the most hardened shrank!

Then came the time when, for the first time, with all the force of his strong nature, he longed for better things. For, out of pity to the friendless girl he made his wife, grew love; and love so pure, and humble, and unselfish, that it entirely changed the man. For her sake, he hated his rude life, which had of old been all he cared for; and, as he saw her dying of the rough, cruel life he led, he hoped again passionately for the peaceful pleasures of his father's home; he longed for the father's pardon which he dared not to entreat.

Alas! it is too late. He is leaving her so fast, so certainly, that no more remains to him but one farewell before he goes; he, whom she has leaned upon and trusted for these three short years, is failing her at last!

He can do nothing more for her!

It is with uncontrollable anguish that he grasps her slender fingers, as if, in touching her, he sought fresh vigour. Oh, if he could but make life safe for her before he left her! If that wronged and angry father were but here, that he might throw away his shame, and pride, and fear, and ask forgiveness!

He is strangely weak—his very thoughts grow indistinct, as if he had not strength to frame them; yet there comes back to him, through the very darkness of his despair, some words that seem born of his hopeless longing: "I will arise—and go to my father."

In the deeply-blue vault overhead a few stars have come out; the faint green stream of light to westward has faded into the darkness of the whole firmament; over the ever-swaying, ever-sighing pine-trees the silver moonbeams herald her coming. It is long since they were left to die. Why does death stay his hand?

The night is cold, and the chilly moonlight is even colder. She has drawn closer to him, but his arm has scarcely strength to clasp her now. Surely, though slowly, life is ebbing from him; even her dear,

low voice, which recalls him, as she breathes his name, from the very gates of the grave, grows fainter on his ear.

Again she speaks, and her frail hand is pointing to the coppice in the valley. Again he hears—he answers. He starts forward, drawing his cold hand across his failing sight. Can it be true? or is it the mockery of death?

No! there are lights below, which he can see—which he, please Heaven, may reach.

"Little one," he says, hope bringing strength, "canst thou walk?"

He has risen; and she rises, too, still clinging to the arm which never yet has failed her. Alas, there is no longer strength in it. He is leaning upon her, and she faints beneath the burden, thinking it her own weakness. Oh! must he fail? It is but one supreme effort, one great last struggle, and life must—nay, it shall be—long enough for that.

He lifts her slowly, and with an agony of pain. Slowly, feebly down the hilly road he staggers on, groping blindly with foot, and hand, and eye, bending and swaying under the light weight of his unconscious burden. At every step the ground appears less steady; with every gasp for breath the air grows heavier; in spite of all his anguish of desire, he must often pause for respite, for relief. Oh, if he dare but loose her for a moment! But no; he knows he never more could raise her!

But yet he struggles on, a pause at every step, a blind, faint grasp at every tree or fence along his path. Still on, his blind, dim gaze fixed on that beacon light before him, which scarcely seems to grow or brighten to his vision. Still on, though pain, and weakness, and despair, and death are claiming him—until he falls across the threshold!

She is saved! And he?

Kind faces bend low over the dying soldier, and tears, such as he never thought to have shed over him, fall fast upon his brow.

Whose is this voice calling him, this hand clasping his? Surely this is the light and rest of Heaven!

Again words, learned long ago, rise to his lips with all the strength of supplication:

"Father—I have sinned—forgive—"

"Forgive thee! Oh, my son! my son! my son!"

GOUT.

THIS tiresome disease is sometimes looked upon as a penalty for the luxurious living of comparatively modern days; but, as a matter of fact, it has afflicted man from the earliest times.

Not long ago a mummy was unwound in Egypt, which was shown by inscriptions to be the mortal remains of one of the Pharaohs, and the knotted fingers proved incontestably that this monarch—who reigned three thousand years ago—was a victim to gout.

The Romans, we know, from several passages in their literature, were no strangers to its attacks; and in their times, as in ours, it was largely attributed to high living. A curious fact in connection with gout, in the days of the Cæsars, is that it is said to have then found its victims chiefly among the weaker sex, who nowadays are comparatively free from it.

The writings of Galen, Hippocrates, and other Greek physicians show that gout was as common in ancient Greece as in her great Latin rival. Galen said of it that it was a distemper which none but the gods could cure—an opinion that must be shared by many sufferers who have tried in vain to obtain relief from its twinges.

The doctor who deserves the monument as high as St. Paul's, as wide as the Thames, and as enduring as time—which Dr. Johnson declared awaited him who found a cure for gout—is still to come, for though its attacks may no doubt be modified by regulating the diet and taking abundant exercise, no one has yet been able to prove himself a master of the art of healing this most difficult of the many difficult diseases to which flesh is heir.

The variety of the remedies recommended for a complaint is a sure index of its susceptibility to treatment; and at one time or another, the doctors have professed themselves to be believers in almost every conceivable method for neutralising the effects of this one. It has been attacked with acids and with alkalies, with fire and water; cauterisation having been once the favourite form of remedy for it, as "aqua pura" was in the early days of this century.

Elizabeth's minister, Lord Burleigh, was recommended a cure for an obstinate attack of gout, by the Archbishop of Armagh, which, had it proved as efficacious as it was nasty, should have placed him out of reach

of its clutches for the rest of his life. The following was the form it assumed:

"Take two spaniel whelps, two days old, scald them and cause the entrails to be taken out, but wash them not. Take four ounces brimstone, four ounces turpentine, one ounce spermaceti, a handful of nettles, and a quantity of balm, and put all the aforesaid in them, stamped, and serve them up, and roast them, and take the drops and anoint you where your grief is."

Stafford was advised by Laud to treat an attack of gout by running up and down with bare feet on dewy grass. Cardinal Zinzendorf believed that he could obtain relief by bathing his legs daily in pig's blood; and Horace Walpole was gravely advised to try the effect of cutting his nails in hot water.

Dr. Sydenham, the renowned English physician of the seventeenth century, who knew by painful experience what gout was, declares it to be almost the only disease which destroys more rich men than poor men, more men of great intellect than men of ordinary capacity and understanding. He says:

"Great Kings, Emperors, Generals, Admirals, and Philosophers, have all died of gout. Hereby Nature shows her impartiality, since those whom she favours in one way she afflicts in another."

Gout is, in short, according to this authority, one of the revenges of good fortune and plenty; but however true this may have been in Sydenham's time, the ailment is more democratic now, and shows no such nice distinction of class. Labourers who keep away from the beer-shop are hardly ever attacked by it; but over-indulgence in malt liquors is one of the surest passports to gout; and the life of fresh air and exercise, which is, broadly speaking, so antagonistic to this scourge of mankind, is powerless against its ravages unless accompanied by moderate abstinence from this particular beverage. Brain-workers who, though enjoying good health, do not take much exercise, are most subject to gout. It is a curious fact that the poorer Irish, who live to a large extent upon potatoes, are said to be absolutely free from its attacks. Gout is undeniably on the increase in this country; and this fact has been put forward as an evidence of our growing wealth and prosperity. A nation must be prosperous to maintain any considerable proportion of its inhabitants in the luxury of gout. There is no country in the world in which gout is so

common as in ours, owing, no doubt, to the largeness of our leisure class, who do little but eat and drink, and endure consequent twinges. It is popularly believed that gout shares with asthma the faculty of lengthening the lives of those whom it favours with its attentions, chiefly because it allows no other disease to dispute its sovereignty. A famous French physician reached the age of a hundred, and for sixty years of his life was subject to gout; and many others, who have attained great age, have been martyrs to it. There is no ailment for which so little sympathy is accorded as for this. The gouty old gentleman is one of the mainstays of the humourist; but few who have not been subject to it realise the dreadful agony that the victim to this disease is called upon to endure.

No doubt the prevalence of gout is to a great extent to be accounted for by the tendency that it has to descend from father to son. Dr. Garrod related that he was once consulted by a patient who told him that his family records showed that every representative of his house had fallen into its clutches for the last four hundred years. No doubt this was an extreme case, for the tendency of gout to "skip a generation" is one of its most widely-recognised attributes. It is supposed that considerably more than half of all cases of gout are hereditary.

Horace Walpole professed himself to be very much hurt at the conduct of gout in selecting him as one of its victims, though his ancestors had been free from it, and he himself had always led an extremely abstemious life.

"If either my father or mother had had it," is his remark, "I should not dislike it so much. I am herald enough to approve of it if descended genealogically; but it is an absolute upstart in me; and what is more provoking, I had trusted to my great abstinence for keeping me from it; but thus it is. If I had any gentleman-like virtue, as patriotism, or loyalty, I might have got something by them; I had nothing but that beggarly virtue, temperance, and she had not interest enough to keep me from a fit of the gout."

A curious little book in honour of the gout was written by one Misaurus, whose object was to show it to be a blessing for which mankind could not be sufficiently thankful. His first task is to set forth the antiquity of his subject, which he does by declaring it to be something younger

than the fall of our first parents, and sent down from heaven mercifully to lengthen the lives forfeited by their transgressions. He then proceeds to give six good and sufficient reasons why gout should be hailed as a blessing.

Firstly, he says, it gives man pain, without danger. Secondly, that it gives those whom it distinguishes by its favours, intervals in which they may experience to the full the enjoyment of health, that never fall to the lot of those who accomplish their earthly pilgrimage without its companionship. Thirdly, he lauds it as a weather guide, beside which barometers are worthless, and predicts that the day will come when no shipowner will consider his vessel safe unless it is under the command of a gouty captain. Fourthly, he avers that gouty people are free from headache. Fifthly, that they are not subject to fevers. And sixthly, that gout is incurable.

Our gout defender does not go so far as to declare that his pet ailment renders men immortal; but he does say that, if ever any one has had the art of preserving himself or others from the shafts of the great destroyer, his secret has laid in the power of inoculating with gout. The objection that gouty people die, like other less-favoured mortals, is met by the remark that they are idiots, who know not when they are well off, but must needs attempt to cure the gout which, if left alone, would preserve them.

The heat of the tropics seems to be in some mysterious way antagonistic to this disease, which is far oftener met with in temperate latitudes than near the equator, and which also is more prevalent in autumn and winter than in the warm months of summer.

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER VI. FACE TO FACE.

Name . . . Rebecca Fordyce Draycott.
Age . . . Thirty-two.
Case of Stabbing.
On Remand.

Thus ran the door-card of the cell into which Louis Draycott's wife had been removed. There had not been any reason to keep her still in the cell apportioned to prisoners who are riotous and unruly. Sullen, sour, morose, and intractable she

had shown herself; but those wild outbursts of destructive rage, those wild fits of screaming and abuse, had never recurred since that memorable interview with the Chaplain, the night after her arrival in the prison, two months ago. What magic he had used to exorcise the unruly spirit of revolt that then possessed her, none knew. At the same time, no one wondered; they had seen the same thing happen too often before, to do that.

"He's tamed her, same as he tames the rest," said George, scratching his head and looking as wise as though the whole process were more than familiar to him; "and as to her bein' his lawful wife—which it seems she is, though I can't stomach it myself—that 'ud make it easier, I reckon, for he'd know the weak side of her—wouldn't he, now?"

But the audience—exclusively feminine—to whom George Bramble was holding forth, would not rise to this suggestion. In the first place, they would by no means admit that a woman could have a weak side to her character; still less that it could be taken for granted that her husband should have a knowledge of the fact—even if it were so. So they pursed up their lips and shook their heads, and George felt that his remark had not been a success, by any means.

He, therefore, harked back upon the Chaplain.

"Things may be as things should be," he said, sententiously; "or they may not. All I can say is, I think the Chaplain's got a mortal look; when I seed him coming out of that there good-for-naught's cell, t'other day, I thought I never seed a mortialer—white as death, as the sayin' is; and Miss Johnstone here found the varmint laughin', with her head huddled on her arms, and rocking of herself to and fro, like as if she wur fit to bust."

Miss Johnstone was one of the female warders who had been present at the first interview between the Chaplain and the unruly inhabitant of the "restraint cell." A sense of importance had been upon her ever since; and now, once again had she had "greatness thrust upon her," for had she not seen Rebecca Fordyce Draycott shaking with silent laughter after her husband had left the cell, with white lips, strained eyes, and looking altogether, as George so graphically described it, "mortal"?

Miss Johnstone bridled, smoothed down

her apron, and set her cap a trifle more forward upon her head.

"I don't wonder the Chaplain was upset-like," she said, "for I happen to know that things have taken a great turn, as you may say."

"Isn't she his wife, after all?" cried they, gathering round, and all speaking at once.

"Oh, yes; she's his wife, right enough—"

"Wrong enough, you should say," put in George, interrupting.

"Well," continued Miss Johnstone, "wrong enough, if you like that better; but the party as was stabbed—the girl she stuck the knife into—she's mortal bad—bad as bad—so they say. They've taken her deposition—as I hear—and the trial's put off till they see how things go."

"Why, if she dies, that 'll be—murder!" said George, suppressedly, but greatly excited.

He had a piece of string in his hand, for he had been undoing a parcel for the matron. He jerked it round his neck, drew it tight a moment, and made an atrocious gesture. They all looked at one another.

Miss Johnstone shook her head. On the ground of keeping company with a lawyer's clerk "outside," she set up as being a bit of an authority upon matters of law.

"Well, I don't know about that," she said; "but this I do know—the Chaplain wouldn't like to have it so; be what she may, and stand in the way of whom she may, his tender heart would ache to think of it. I tell you, he'd move heaven and earth to get her off—"

"It's more than I'd do," growled George, from somewhere low down in himself, "if I was him."

"But you ain't, you see," retorted Miss Johnstone, with a jerk of the head, "that's where it lies. You ain't, and you never will be; and no one never will be."

Bessy—who had joined the group—emphatically chimed in with the opinion of the last speaker; and, for the twentieth time, began to tell the story of all the Chaplain's goodness to her and hers "in time of trouble," ending with a hint as to news of such a character as dwarfed all Miss Johnstone's to a mere ripple on the surface of prison life.

Could it be true? they said; could it be true, that the Chaplain they all loved

so well was about to leave them? What would the prison be like without him? they should like to know. Who would tame the "wild ones;" who would be tender to the "sad ones;" who would heal the broken-hearted; who would help any one through his or her day's work, and make the heavy burden light, when he was gone?

"If this news is true," said Miss Johnstone, who had a slightly injured air, as of one who has been jostled and set aside in the race for social distinction, "it's my opinion as Mr. Draycott is fleeing from sorrow."

"And what's to become of the pretty one as blessed father so lovely—she as worships the ground our Chaplain treads on—as any one may see with half an eye, let alone wi' two or'nary ones set straight in 's yed?"

Over and over again had George told the story of Mazie's visit to old David; and how the Chaplain watched every look of her, "same as a miser might watch his gold," and afterwards the two hung back together, "same as folk 'courting,'" and looked up at the prison; and the "pretty one" said "summat to Mr. Draycott, and all his face lighted up wi' such a smile as no man never saw wi'out his heart leapin' up into his mouth and flutterin' there fit to choke him."

All this had been talked over, and every detail of it petted and made much of by the women, long since; so surrounding the Chaplain with a halo of romance in the eyes of these simple folk, that he might have been a knight of old, with a lady's colours bound about his arm.

In prison life—that life which is so bound up in itself, and runs so deeply in its dark and narrow bed—a bit of romance like this is a sun-ray gilding the surface of the stream, and touching it to a strange beauty. Quite a tender interest, then, had gathered round Louis Draycott, and the "pretty one" of whom George had told them all; an interest by no means lessened by Bessy's history of how that bright and sweet young lady came to visit her in the days of her hard and bitter sorrow; and how, upon that gentle breast, she had wept the first softening tears that fell from her poor eyes.

"I reckon she'll come to see the sad and sorry ones, ay, and the baddest and boldest of 'em, too, in this here praisin, once she's the Chaplain's wife; and I'd think it nothin' too much to scrope up t'dust wi'

my hand, to mak' a clean place for her to set her little foot upon—that wouldn't I!" George had said, anticipating pleasant days to come, both for the Chaplain and himself. "I tell you father was a knowledgeable man, was father—a man of gifts—a man, as the sayin' is, as didn't need to look over a stone wall, but could see through 't; and he saw how things wur betwixt them two—that did he—and blessed 'em most solemn; it wur same as bein' in a church, I'd a mind to look i' the crown o' my hat, and say, Amen, same as we used to do up home of a Sunday, in our village church across the green, and down under the big yew-trees, you know; so I had—"

"It must have felt to them almost like — getting married," some listener — a woman, of course—had suggested.

"Well," George had replied, "it were a fore-shadowing, as you may say; and I've seen many a man worse at the parson part of it than father. He wur a man of gifts, wur father."

And now all this sweet romance was overshadowed and blighted!

"When I think," said George, "of that worthless varmint there, bringing sorrow on that sweet head; bringing tears to them sweet eyes, as looked on father so tender-like—"

But what he felt when he thought on these things was never to be known, for here he stopped short, and all the women of the group faced round, just at the end of the gallery where they stood, each dropping a hurried courtesy, and only preventing themselves from uttering some exclamation or other by main force, as it were; indeed, as they said afterwards, "you might have knocked them down with a feather—any one of them!"

For there, before their eyes, at that unusual and unwonted hour, behold the Governor of the prison, himself in a high state of excitement and military courtesy, escorting the very sweetest young lady they had ever seen, and whom they knew at once to be the heroine of what might well be called the "Prison Romance." Sweet, indeed, she was, to all eyes; but, oh! what a white, set face was hers—how pale—with bright brown hair put back under a little black bonnet, from which a long veil fell down behind, so that she looked almost like a widow! But her eyes were not tearful. No; they were bright as stars, and, as she turned and smiled at Bessy, they seemed to burn with a

fevered and intense light. The Governor walked beside her, hat in hand, watching her with unmistakeable admiration; and she—apparently seeing this—received it, as might some goddess the oblation of an humble devotee.

Behind these two came the matron, herself pale with excitement, and a female warder, who gave the slightest possible toss of her capped head at Miss Johnstone as she passed, as who should say: "Gossiping at the head of the corridor, my dear, I see, and so you're not in this swim."

When the party reached the door separating the men's from the women's side of the prison, it might have been noticed that Mazie's cheek grew even paler than before; whiter yet when they reached the door of Rebecca's cell. But her self-possession was perfect, and never deserted her. As the wardress lifted the disc of the spy-hole, to warn the inmate of the approach of visitors, and when the key grated in the lock, Mazie never winced. She stood there, tall and fair in the golden sheen of the August sunlight—a lily among women—her lips a little apart, to let the quickened breath come and go; but with no other sign of the tumult within, visible.

At the very door of the cell she turned a moment, and laid her hand on the Governor's arm, raising pleadingly to his those wondrous eyes, filled with a strange, unearthly radiance.

Even the simplest woman is conscious of her own weapons, and will use them, either for offence or defence, in time of need.

"You have shown me so much kindness to-day, sir, that I am not afraid to ask still further indulgence at your hands. I would ask to be allowed to see this poor woman—alone."

The Major grew purple to the tips of his ears.

It was against all rule, this request of Mazie's; and yet to refuse anything to this lovely woman; to turn a deaf ear to the pleading of that low and gentle voice; to resist the eloquence of those wonderful speaking eyes—was a thing hardly to be expected of any man who had ever held Her Majesty's commission!

He glanced nervously up and down the corridor. Not a soul was in sight. No one heard the request made, or could hear the answer given, save the two grey-gowned women, whose eyes were meekly lowered, and whose faces were, for the nonce, absolutely expressionless.

"Ahem!" said the Governor, feeling the glow of the girl's uplifted eyes upon his face, and noticing how the helpful-looking hands were wrung the one in the other, "it's not our rule, you know, my dear young lady—not quite our rule."

"But, you see, she is not tried yet—she is not a condemned prisoner," put in Mazie, with timid resolution. "Might not that make a difference—that, and my being so very, very wishful to see her alone! You know something of our strange story; you can imagine we must have a great deal to say to each other. I have heard, sir, that you have a daughter of your own—if my sad story were hers, if such sorrow had come upon her as has come upon me, I am sure you would bless those who were good to her, those who helped her, those who—"

But here the sweet voice broke and faltered. Which was perhaps as well, since the Governor was pretty near at his wit's end, blowing his nose violently, and giving other signs of extreme disquietude.

"Bless my soul!" he said, panting, as if he had run a mile in the August sun. "Don't distress yourself like that, my—my dear. This is an exceptional case—quite an exceptional case; and I'm sure our good matron here will understand that she has my permission—in fact, that she can arrange matters to chime in with you. Bless my soul! I never was so upset by a case since I—dear me! most sad, most sad! I may say that there has never been any one so respected and so beloved as Mr. Draycott. I have never known any one to get such hold of the prisoners, as it were, to be so looked-up to, and to have such an influence—and, really, my dear, good young lady, don't, pray don't! I have not deserved such a reward, I haven't, indeed."

For Mazie had taken his little podgy hand in her two soft white ones, and touched it with her lips.

"I leave you in good hands," he said, making haste to be gone, and pointing to the matron, who still observed the same stolid demeanour as before. "Good-bye, and Heaven bless you. My heart aches for you—it does indeed—and for him, too—for him, too."

The three women were left standing in the grim-looking corridor before the unlocked, but still closed door.

"The rule is," said the matron, "that during any interview with a prisoner, I should stand inside the door. In this

case, madam, I shall remain on the seat in the gallery, outside the door. No one else will approach the cell, while you are in it. Will you enter?"

She motioned to the warder to withdraw, and held the door open for Mazie to pass in.

"You are very good to me—I am very grateful to you all," said the girl, with a sweet, sad smile on the lips that were now as white as milk, yet did not twitch nor tremble, for all that.

"I shall be within call, madam, in case of need," added the matron, in a low tone.

"I do not fear any need."

"Nor do I."

Another moment, and these two women—the woman who was Louis Draycott's wife, and the woman whom he loved as his own life, and dearer—stood face to face.

For Rebecca has risen from the low, hard bench that is almost the only furniture in the cell, and stands peering, with a sort of insolent curiosity, at the new-comer.

Since we saw her last, the prisoner has changed much for the better. The enforced quiet and regularity of her life has told upon her; and through the influence of the Chaplain she has been allowed many little comforts in the way of extra diet, and exercise in the corridor and in the yard. Her hair is put back tidily behind her ears; and her face is no longer bloated; her sly, furtive eyes no longer glare and bloodshot. Amid the wreck of all she is, it is easy to note the marks of what she has been, namely, a gentlewoman. In spite of her having drifted into the shoals and quicksands of life, and been cruelly battered in the struggle and the strife, it is plain to be seen, even by the little bow, which she at last bestows upon her unlooked-for visitor, from what class she comes.

They might have stood side by side, equals in every way, these two women—the one who has marred, the other who would fain make, the life of Louis Draycott.

Now, it is one of the unfathomable mysteries of prison life that, in utter defiance of all laws as to the silence and isolation of prisoners, anything that goes on in the place is just as well known to every man and woman in it as though the prison were a country town infested by the usual gossips of both sexes. In vain do the authorities endeavour to intersect

this network of secret telegraphy. No "Mary Anne" society is more subtle, more sure, or more inscrutable in its machinery.

Of course, all this was a sealed book to Margaret Birt, standing calm and pale before the prisoner, who was "under remand" for stabbing; and it seemed to her the hardest part of her task that she should have to explain who and what she was.

She begins timidly enough, going, however, straight up to Rebecca and looking her gravely and steadily in the face:

"I am sure you must be wondering who I am—coming to you suddenly—like this?"

The other sits down, folds her arms on the shabby wooden table, and looks up at her visitor warily.

"Not at all. I know who you are quite well; you are the girl Louis was going to marry."

"Still it may seem strange to you that I should come here."

"Not a bit. You wanted to see what I was like. People always want to see those who baulk them. Well, I'm not much to look at, am I?"

"I did not come to look at you."

With a low chuckle, the woman begins to rock herself slowly backwards and forwards.

"It won't do, you know," she says. "I'm no fool. I know what you're after, as well as you do yourself—you want to have the crow over me; but"—this with a pitiable revival of a vanity that one might well have supposed long enough dead—"I wasn't so bad-looking once; when I let it loose, my hair would hang to my feet. It's a tousled lot now, I know; but it was good enough then. I tell you, Louis once said he never saw such hair. I hadn't much else to boast of—but I had that."

Woman-like, Rebecca has tipped her little arrow with poison, and now, with narrowed, eager eyes watches to see its sting. But it glances harmlessly by.

"Did he?" says Mazie, quietly; "I do not wonder at it. I am sure it must have been very pretty—it is pretty still, with that curl in it."

Again the low laughter; but this time mingled with something like shamefacedness.

Then a question on her own part:

"If you didn't come to see what I was like, what did you come for?"

Mazie kneels down on the boards that shine as white and clean as marble, kneels

close to the table, so that the light from the window, high in the wall, falls full upon her pale, uplifted face—the face that Louis Draycott had once described as “the face of a child with the eyes of a mystic.”

Now, as the radiance of those wonderful eyes meets her own, Rebecca cowers a moment, then looks up defiantly. But the defiant spirit cannot live before the gentleness and pity that breathes in every line of Mazie's face. The bold eyes grow almost timid; one might fancy a tremble round the full, coarsened lip.

“I will tell you what I have come for,” says Mazie, folding her hands closely together, as is her habit when in any tension of feeling. “I have come to ask you to do something for me—to give me a promise—to take a weight of sorrow off my heart.”

She stops a moment, and the other puts in a word quickly.

“You want me to go away when I get out of this, and let you marry Louis?”

“How could that be?” replies Mazie. “How could I marry Louis? You are his wife.”

“Well, I've done enough and to spare to give him the chance of getting rid of me. He could put me away if he liked, any day.”

“That would make no difference to him or to me. You are his wife, and that is what I want to speak about.” She pauses a moment, and draws a long, shivering breath, while the hot colour steals into her cheek, and her eyes grow soft and dreamy. “I once read in a story-book that there are some men in the world whom a woman must love, must be ready to give up everything for—not whether she will or she won't, but just because there is no other way. I wondered about this to myself, and thought how strange it would be if I should ever come to love any one like that—I mean with no power to do anything but love him; but I never seemed to understand it one little bit until I met Louis. Then I knew all about it. I had no need to puzzle over it any more.”

Rebecca is listening intently, her strange, furtive eyes watching every change that comes across the beautiful face of the

woman who thus lays bare her own heart, telling the story of her own innermost life; and whose eyes seem to be watching something very far away—something in which that sordid cell, and the prison life that it so well typifies, has neither lot nor part.

“He never seemed very far away from me, even when I did not see him for a whole day, for the memory of little things, of what he said, and how he looked, of how we met, and how we parted, was always with me and about me. Thinking of these things now, when they are all turned to sadness, it came upon me to feel sure that no woman could have married Louis—could have been his wife, without learning to love him dearly. I have found the lesson so easy myself, you see, that I know how easy it must have been to any other.”

Heaven knows what memories of long-dead things, of hours of high resolve, of tender impulses, of cravings after better things, rise up in her poor, sin-soiled heart as Rebecca listens. A dewy brightness—strange visitor, indeed!—gathers in the crafty eyes; and slowly, as Mazie tells the story of the love that has been so beautiful and full of hope, and is now so sad, the woman's head droops forward on her arms, and she lies prone and still.

“I thought so,” says Mazie, with a faint, fitting smile, and lays her hand tenderly upon the bowed head. “I knew you must have loved him. Your life has been closer to his than mine will ever be. You have pillowed your head upon his breast—as I had hoped to pillow mine—and felt that the heart that beat there was all the world to you; and that you would die rather than wound it by word or deed. There must have been such moments for you—he being what he is—and it is by the memory of that precious past that I pray of you to listen to me now, and grant me what I beg for from you. There is, there must be a bond between us. We have both loved him; let us both spare him all we can; let us both be very tender over him. There is no one like him; no one—no one! Let us help him; let us both help him all we can!”

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A KNOT IN A HANDKERCHIEF.

By "RITA."

CHAPTER I. THE KNOT.

SHE was very, very pretty—but it was not that. She had a bunch of daffodils fastened carelessly at the throat of her brown plush coat—a reminder of spring and of the season when our Laureate informs us "a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love"—but it was not that. No. I distinctly repeat that neither the fair face, nor the brown eyes, nor the daffodils had anything to do with it. It was simply that, sitting opposite to her in that useful if not most aristocratic of vehicles, the "bus," I observed that suddenly she drew out from her pocket a dainty scrap of cambric, which I suppose she would have termed a handkerchief, and proceeded, calmly and deliberately, to tie a knot in it.

Now I am not more curious than the generality of my sex; but, at the time of which I write, I had a way of studying my fellow man—and woman—in and out of omnibuses, for many reasons. I affected omnibuses as a means of locomotion, though I should have preferred a carriage and pair, or a private hansom, had I had the option of choice. That being denied me by the cruelty of Fate, I generally travelled Strandwards once or twice a day in the useful and inexpensive "bus," and for an hour, at least, that journey afforded me a fund of rich conjecture, and sometimes not a little amusement.

When I saw people dashing by in hansoms, victorias, buggies, and broughams, I said to myself, compassionately, "How much they miss!" They could not make acquaintance with the varied types of beings with whom I enjoyed speculative acquaintance—in omnibuses—and thereby must have lost one of the pleasures of life.

No. I could really almost afford to pity them when I considered the amount of amusement—not to say interest—I had derived from my omnibus acquaintances! What could my friends of the private hansom and the snug brougham know of the dear old lady, who invariably "tumbles" into her "bus," and falls into the arms of her fellow passengers with a blissful indifference as to their capacity for supporting or assisting her to a seat; or of the helpless female who always has an umbrella, and always holds it in her arms in such a fashion that the handle and the point make alternate stabs at the faces and eyes of the passengers, and who never seems to have acquired the art of producing balance, by seizing the top rail, but just flops from side to side with feeble smile and useless apologies till some one fixes her in a seat! Then there is the austere maiden, with smileless lips and stern eyes, who surveys her fellow-passengers as one who should say, "Don't attempt your frivolous remarks on weather or 'limited accommodation,' to me;" who knows where she is going, and the exact fare, and pounces severely on the conductor if he should make a mistake in the change for a shilling. And the fidgety old lady who per-

sistently shouts out her destination, and jumps up excitedly at every stoppage thinking she has reached it. And the lady of uncertain age, who prods the conductor with her umbrella at all times and seasons, and offers her fare long before it is due, by way of complicating his calculations, and unburthening her own mind and purse. And the irate old gentleman, who always has a grievance and is always going to write to "the secretary and complain of incivility," as the notice of the company kindly suggests. Then there is the troublesome child, whose boots have such a charming faculty of acquainting themselves with the dresses, and coats, and shins on either side of "it." I say "it," because I agree with certain rules of German grammar which ascribe the neuter gender to those sweet beings, until they have gained sense or knowledge sufficient to endow them with the privilege of sex. And then there is the fat passenger, who never has room enough, but declines to take the hint that payment for the double space, occupied so tranquilly, might suit the relative convenience of "the squasher" and "the squashee." And the thin passenger, who drifts to the roomiest side—as naturally as the fat passenger to the most crowded—perhaps on the principle of "Like to like." And the knowing passenger, and the ignorant passenger, who has not the vaguest idea that the Temple does not lie in the direction of an omnibus steadily proceeding to Kilburn, or Brompton, and yet never thinks of asking the question till nearly at her journey's end. And the talkative passenger, and the gloomy and sternly silent passenger, who seems to consider a remark as a personal affront; and the passenger who never can find her purse, and persists in standing on the steps searching for it, and wildly clutching at the air when the 'bus moves on, and is only saved by a special Providence, or—the conductor, from an ignominious contact with the muddy street, or the inviting pavement. These, and many other curious beings, are the types of omnibus frequenters; and I, being by nature and profession a student of human nature, had found them an endless source of interest and speculation as I journeyed to or from the editor's "den" where I worked, and the modest lodging I inhabited. But never before had I seen any of that sex, whose idiosyncrasies specially delighted me, do such a thing as my opposite neighbour had done, namely, tie a knot in her handkerchief.

I looked at her. I looked at the knot as she replaced the wisp of filmy cambric in her dainty little muff; for, despite sunshine and soft winds and daffodils, no wise or sensible person, who had lived for any length of time in England, would have dreamt of believing the promise of that spring day.

I didn't believe it, though I had left my overcoat at home. But then it was shabby, and the sunshine was very bright. I had also corrected my imprudence by taking an umbrella with me. It was a very smart umbrella, and I am not betraying confidence when I say it was not mine, but the property of a friend to whom I was going to return it on my way home, provided it did not rain. Well, as I have already said, I looked at the knot and at the maker of the knot, and puzzled as to why and wherefore she had made it, and found that the progress of speculation acquainted me with various facts which perhaps had very little to do with that knot, but which still were—interesting.

For instance there were her eyes—brown, soft, velvety—full of unknown possibilities. Eyes which looked as if dreams of the "to be" had filled with the mists of their own fancies those sweet, soft depths. And her hair, brown also, but catching glints of sunshine in its meshes, and framing in the white, smooth brow, and faintly tinted cheek, with just the needful tone of colour they required. And her lips, charming in repose, arched and pouting, and with faint suggestions of dimples on either side, and which one felt sure would look equally charming if parted in speech or laughter.

But of course all this had nothing to do with my interest in the girl herself. No; as I said before, and as I distinctly repeat again, it was simply and entirely that knot in the handkerchief.

There were not many people in the omnibus that morning; and one by one they dropped, or jumped, or stumbled out, until at last only she and I were left. She and I—and the knot.

Oh, how I longed to ask its meaning! How I wished that I had been born without curiosity! How I wondered whether audacity or accident would befriend me so far as to put some question or remark into a deferential form of address, and thereby lead up gently to the subject on which I was speculating!

I grew hot and cold with dread and suspense. Every glance at the conductor

seemed to convey the ominous command, "stop." Every movement of the daintily-gloved hand threatened the production of a purse and the threepence. Here at present was a threepenny fare—I had calculated that. So was mine. I thought what a sweet and mysterious sympathy must have brought us to share the same conveyance and the same fare. I also thought how well yellow daffodils looked against brown plush, and that if Fate had been kind enough to grant me a sister, I should have chosen just such a type of maiden sweetness and purity, and—well—beauty, as was the knotter of that handkerchief. I thought—well, a great many things which I am not bound to confess; but most of all I thought of that knot, and why it had been made.

We were in the most crowded part of the Strand, and our equipage was dashing merrily along, when suddenly there came a fearful crash—a jerk that threw my fellow-passenger into my arms, to the serious detriment of her hat, and the daffodils.

It was a not unusual catastrophe; the omnibus had come into collision with another omnibus, and the wheels seemed to have got hopelessly intermixed. There was much swearing and vociferating, and jerking of the unwieldy vehicle, and confusion of voices, and a brief dialogue with a policeman, and then we got off again.

But the accident had broken the ice; and my pretty companion and I exchanged a few words relative to the carelessness of omnibus-drivers before she got out.

For she did get out at Wellington Street, and I sighed as I watched the graceful figure disappear, and wondered if I should ever see it again. Strange to say, the accident had completely driven out of my head the knot in the handkerchief. I, in turn, reached my destination, and stopped the conductor, and rose from my seat. As I moved to the door I saw something white lying just where my foot had been. I stooped and picked it up, and thrust it into the breast of my coat. It was her handkerchief—the handkerchief with the knot that had been puzzling me so long. It must have fallen from her muff when the omnibus collision took place. I had not the vaguest idea what made me snatch it up as if it belonged to me. I suppose I ought to have given it to the conductor; but if that was a more honest proceeding than appropriating it myself, I agree with the Jew, who observed, of what the proverb

terms "the best policy," that no doubt it might be the best, but he thanked Heaven he had always been able to do without it.

In this special instance I found myself quite able to "do without it;" and the little handkerchief, with its delicate suggestion of perfume, and its feminine puzzling knot, lay near my heart all day, and kept me in constant remembrance of the pretty owner.

Should I ever see her again? Would she miss the handkerchief? Would the loss of that mysterious knot in any way affect her actions? For little things become sometimes powerful levers to Fate.

I am afraid I thought of her a great deal, despite work and the bother and fuss of publishing day, for I was sub-editor on the staff of a popular journal, which modesty forbids me to name here. Literature was, indeed, my forte, or I imagined it so to be. I had published three novels, written sundry farces and plays, and done a great deal of miscellaneous work that served to pad magazines and society papers. I was a long way off making my fortune, though, and was seriously thinking of emigrating to that new El Dorado—the Cape—where gold mines and diamond fields seem to be as common as black-beetles in a lodging-house kitchen, when I met the fair owner of the handkerchief.

All that day my thoughts seemed obstinately bent on the desirability of attaining wealth; of having a house of one's own; of the joys of domesticity, as opposed to bachelorhood; of a fair face to smile welcome and greeting after the day's labours were ended; of—well, really I cannot write half of the wild thoughts and fancies that flitted through my brain.

I had never been in so strange and foolish a mood since my "calf days;" never felt my mind swaying to and fro so persistently over a field of romantic possibilities, conjured up by a fair face, a pair of soft eyes, the smile of sweet, serious lips. But again I repeated to myself that in this instance it was not the face, or the eyes, or the girl herself; it was only, and simply, and entirely that she had chosen to puzzle me into conjectures about that knot in her handkerchief.

Work was over at last, and I was free to leave office, and papers, and all the worries attendant on them behind, and to stroll home in the sweet, cool evening, in as leisurely a fashion as I wished. The spring day had kept its promise: the sky was clear above the dingy buildings and

crowded thoroughfares; the air mild and sweet as the violets, and primroses, and daffodils, which everywhere brightened the street corners from flower-girls' baskets or market trucks.

Poets always speak of spring as if it was a joyous time, and to be taken joyously. Maybe that is possible when one is very young, or very happy. I only know that to me the voice of spring is full of yearning and regret, of sad and tender memories that made my vanished youth bright and hopeful as itself—but, unlike itself, fulfilled no single promise.

Perhaps never had I felt that yearning, and sadness, and regret, so strongly as on this morning of which I write, nor the longing for one other soul in sympathy with mine; one other life to share with me its dreams and visions, its joys and sorrows; one strong, firm hand-clasp of friend or love on the shifting sands of time; and never before had I known the longing die out in a passion of wild regrets and futile rebellion, that to a woman would have meant tears, to me, alas! only the old, weary burden of endurance for endurance's sake.

CHAPTER II. THE REASON OF THE KNOT.

I WAS almost at my own door, when suddenly my eyes fell on something in my hand—the umbrella! I had promised to return it that evening, and the sight of it recalled the promise, and induced me to turn my footsteps in the direction of Piccadilly, where lived its owner—the one individual among my numerous acquaintances who really stood to me in the light of that much-abused word, "friend."

Launcelot Crampton and I had been college chums together, and though fortune had favoured him, and deserted me, we had always kept up the intimacy and companionship begun in our youth. He was younger than myself, and possessed of independent means. However, that fact did not prevent him from utilising talents of no mean order. His artistic tastes had led him to follow painting as a profession; and as success is sure to befriend the fortunate, who do not actually need it, he had the satisfaction of becoming popular, and of being largely sought after as a portrait-painter, by reason of one picture which he had exhibited three seasons before that spring-time of which I write.

His rooms were in a street leading out

of Piccadilly, with a studio at the top of the house. I was admitted, and found him in the studio, lazily stretched on a divan, and smoking Turkish cigarettes, while he contemplated a half-finished picture on the easel before him. He raised himself on one arm as I entered, and greeted me with his usual bright smile of welcome.

"Quite a stranger, old man," he said. "What have you been doing with yourself? You've not been here for a good three weeks."

I shook hands, and gravely deposited the borrowed umbrella on a chair.

"You see," I remarked, "I have not forgotten to bring back your property."

"Yes," he said, "I see. Banks told me you had borrowed it the other day. Why wouldn't you come in?"

"I heard you had a sitter. I didn't like to intrude."

"Ah, yes," he said, his face brightening into a smile of pleasure and satisfaction, "so I had. There's the portrait. What do you think of it?"

I turned and glanced at the easel. To say I started, is to say very little. There, facing me, was the sweet girl-face, the brown, velvety eyes, the hair half dark, half gold, of my friend of the handkerchief.

"What is it? Do you know her?" asked Launcelot. "I dare say you do, though. Perhaps you've seen her act—May Dering, you know; she's in that piece at the V—Theatre. She's absolutely charming. That's going up to the Academy," he added. "But there's a good month's work in it yet."

I said nothing, only stood and gazed at the portrait—a half-length figure; the dress of dead white satin, a cloak of faint sea-green plush, lined with exquisitely-tinted silk of the palest coral, just falling from the graceful shoulders.

How lovely she was—how lovely! And now I knew her—an actress, and one already celebrated for her grace, and beauty, and talent. One of the few actresses who was a lady, and could play a lady on the stage as in a modern drawing-room, without affectation, without vulgarity, without that drawback to most modern acting—burlesque of the part played.

May Dering—I had seen her act, but at too great a distance to recognise the face that morning in the omnibus. But now how it all came back to me! A dim room; the pathos and tragedy of a girl's face;

the tender, broken music of a voice that always went straight to the hearts of her audience.

"Well, are you ever going to speak," demanded Launcelot at last, "or has that portrait deprived you of your senses? I don't wonder at it, for I'm quite gone on her myself. She's every bit as charming as she looks, and that's saying a good deal."

"Yes," I said, abstractedly, and then turned away with sudden resolution. "It's very odd," I continued, "how small the world seems, and how one is always knocking up against people quite unexpectedly."

"A propos of what is that philosophical remark?" enquired Launcelot, knocking the ash off his cigarette, and stretching himself out in an attitude of lazy contemplation of his work.

"A propos of Miss Dering," I said; and straightway related the omnibus incident.

He listened with apparent interest.

"Well, it is singular," he said. "And so you've got the handkerchief? Would you like to return it to her in person? I'll give you the chance if you wish."

"I should not—object," I said, cautiously, and trying—I hope with success—to make my face express nothing at all, and express it well.

"Well," laughed the lazy youth, surveying me from a vantage point of comfort, "I can manage it, for I'm going to an affair to-night where she is to be, and I can take you, if you like."

If I like! If parched ground likes rain. If burning desert loves shade. If the drooping flowers like the showers of summer. If—well, no need to continue in this strain. I could make but one answer conscientiously, and, being conscientious, I, of course, made it. I agreed to call for Launcelot at eleven o'clock, and proceed to the festive gathering where my divinity of the handkerchief was to appear; and after a little more desultory conversation, and a good deal of "chaff" on the part of Crampton, I left the studio, and took my way to my own modest "diggings."

I am not a social man, and I never particularly affect those entertainments called "At Homes," where the unfortunate male biped has to stand in corners or on a stairway for three or four mortal hours, catching occasional glimpses of a singer or reciter in the far distance—pinned in by arms and limbs of other suffering mortals—occasionally struggling for a tepid ice, or a glass of that

mildly poisonous beverage yclept "claret-cup," until the clock "strikes the hour of retiring;" and, with a sigh of relief, and a smile of forced politeness, you murmur over the hand of the equally martyred hostess, "Thanks for such a pleasant evening."

No; I hated parties of all sorts. My chief dissipation was a Bohemian supper with some three or four kindred souls, or a visit to the theatre. Yet now I was making one of a crowd, and a considerable crowd, too, among a set of people I did not know in the least, and certainly did not care a pin about—and for what? Only that I might restore a piece of property which I could perfectly well have left at Crampton's studio for its owner. Only that I might again look into the depths of those velvety brown orbs which, for the space of one spring day, had haunted me.

Well, I dare say men have ere this gone to parties and entertainments for reasons quite as ridiculous.

We had our names shouted up the staircase, and I bowed to a stout, matronly person in ruby velvet and diamonds, who I believe was the hostess, but whose name I don't know to this day. Needless to say I had not come to see her.

Launcelot and I succeeded after a time in getting into the reception-rooms, which were very full, and where music was going on as an aid to conversation.

My friend seemed to know every one; but I felt rather "out of it," to use a slang but expressive term. I glanced about with idle curiosity. I listened to scraps and ends of conversation with that vague indifference born of boredom, which represents a great deal of modern enjoyment—that is to say, if we may believe the tales in the smoking-room.

I saw many pretty women, many lovely toilettes, many interesting and celebrated persons elbowing their way through the well-bred crowd, exchanging greetings, breaking up into groups, and generally behaving according to the edicts of society. But I saw not the one fair face I wished to see, and was just anathematising my folly in coming to such a gathering, when Launcelot's voice at my elbow broke cheerfully on the gloomy meditations caused by his desertion.

On his arm was my charming acquaintance of the morning, looking far lovelier even than my dreams of her, far lovelier, so I thought, than the portrait on the easel—far lovelier because of the flush and smile of recognition that seemed

to break like sunlight over her face as Launcelot introduced me by name.

She held out her hand with the frankest, sweetest grace.

"You are not—quite—a stranger," she said, and the deep, sweet tones of her voice sounded to me as no strains of music, however beautiful, could have sounded.

I am usually accounted a very self-possessed man; but I don't know where my self-possession fled. If I looked as great a fool as I felt, I can afford to be sorry for myself as I felt the touch of that small, gloved hand, and looked back into the sweet and haunting eyes.

I stammered out a question as to the effects of the omnibus accident, and then, somehow, Launcelot drifted away, and my courage returned, and I managed to find her a seat and to plunge desperately into some sort of conversation in the hope of keeping her for a few moments to myself.

That handkerchief, that thrice-blessed handkerchief, came on the scene. I felt reluctant enough to part with it; but what could I do? Yet, as I gave it back, and saw the soft smile on her lips, a sort of desperate courage induced me to ask the question that had tormented my curious mind in the omnibus.

"I suppose," I said, boldly, "you will think me very impertinent if I tell you that I have been puzzling my brains all day to fathom the meaning of this—knot? When you made it this morning I was vainly endeavouring to conjecture a reason. I have seen handkerchiefs put to many uses, but I never saw one knotted like this before."

"Oh," she said, with a little soft laugh, as she took the cambric from my hand, "that is easily explained. Have you really never seen any one—any woman, of course—tie a knot in her handkerchief?"

"Never!" I affirmed stoutly. "Is it—usual?"

"I think so," she said, demurely. "It is done as a reminder. At least, so I have heard. You want to remember some special thing, and when you take out your handkerchief and see the knot, you think of it at once."

"How very ingenious!" I said. "Now, that would never have occurred to a man. He would either trust to memory or—a pocket-book. So that knot was to remind you of—something. Something you were afraid of forgetting?"

"Being an author," she said, "I suppose you are privileged to express curiosity, and

try to satisfy it. But it is an odd coincidence that this little knot, which has so puzzled you, has something to do with—yourself."

"With me?" I echoed, vaguely. "That sounds impossibly flattering."

"I do not mean it to be so," she said, gravely; "but it really is a little odd. I had this morning to see about some stage requisites, and I thought, as I was in the Strand, I would get that book of yours—'Story of a Life.' I had had it from the library; but I and my mother liked it so much that I thought I would buy it, as I was in the Strand this morning. The memory flashed into my mind as I sat in the omnibus, and, for fear of forgetting, as I had so many commissions, I made that knot. Was I not right when I said that it was a little—odd?"

"I—I suppose so," I said, stupidly. My thoughts were in a whirl—brown plush, daffodils, knots, collisions, all seemed mixed and mingled in a string of thronging memories. "It seems too good to believe."

"Why? There is nothing so very unnatural about the coincidence. Your books are popular, and deservedly so. I wish there were more of them, for my part—only three, and I have them all."

Was ever flattery so sweet? Was ever incense so potent? And yet I could only sit dumb and stupid there, and wonder if she really meant it; if she really cared for anything I had written, remembered any word I had said.

I looked at her, at the charming pose she had taken, at the sweet face, the pearly gleams of her satin gown. I had never felt so strangely and strongly attracted to any one before; and yet even as I acknowledged the attraction, the folly of it came home to me with that warning of common-sense we so often disregard.

"It is more than kind of you," I said, "to tell me so flattering a truth. To know that even one among a crowd of readers appreciates him, is an author's best payment."

"You ought to be receiving plenty of such payment, then," she said. "I think your books are widely read and universally liked. You write a little too much above the head of ordinary folk to be exactly popular; but you surely call yourself successful?"

"No," I said, gloomily, "I do not; and I certainly can't make money."

"Oh, money!" she said, with a pretty pout of the charming lips. "Don't say

you write for that, or are sordid, or mercenary. It spoils all imagination, inspiration, romance."

"Maybe so," I said; "but it is absolutely necessary. I have failed to impress upon my tailor, or my bootmaker, or my tradespeople, that imagination and romance should be fostered by long credit, and never roughly disturbed by demands for the settlement of that obnoxious document, 'a little account.'"

She laughed.

"I suppose," she said, "that is true enough. How tiresome it is to want money, and to feel that for the mere want of it so much that is good and artistic has literally to go to the wall!"

"You," I said, gravely, "have never felt that need, I am sure. I hope you never will."

Our eyes met. I saw her face had grown sad and shadowed. In that glance, brief as it was, I seemed as if I had dreamt whole years away; yet only awoke, as a dreamer awakes, to find that I had forgotten everything, save that the dream had been very sweet.

"How little people really know of one another!" she said. "You mistake very much if you think I have never known trouble or poverty. It was that knowledge which drove me to the stage four years ago. It was that trouble——"

She broke off abruptly. Her face grew very pale; the bouquet of daffodils in her hand trembled.

"That—what?" I asked, involuntarily.

As I followed her glance, I saw it rest for a moment on a man leaning against the door-post at some distance from where we were seated. A short, coarse, middle-aged man, with a fat, white face and thick lips, and scanty fair hair. I did not know him; but I fancied my companion did, for the glance spoke recognition as well as dislike.

"I—I hardly know what I was going to say," she said, and her voice sounded to me tired and languid now. "Perhaps that poverty has made women commit greater crimes than men; has often, so sadly often, wrecked and spoilt the promise of womanhood with the cruelty of a relentless fate."

"Strange words," I said, involuntarily, "for such young lips."

"Oh," she said, passionately, "I am not young; I am not ignorant. Do not think that. Life has been always hard to me. I don't know whether it may not prove even harder—soon."

Again her eyes strayed to that coarse, uninteresting figure, and I could not restrain the impulse that bade me ask his name.

"Don't you know him?" she said. "That is Lord Vereker. He is one of the greatest patrons of the modern drama. No first night is complete without his presence; no piece successful till it has received the seal of his approval."

"Is he a friend of yours?" I asked, jealously.

She looked at me; then half rose from her seat.

"Take me down to the tea-room," she said, "and I will tell you. At present it is only necessary to say that it is at Lord Vereker's request your friend is painting my portrait, and that he—is to pay for it."

CHAPTER III.

"THE REGION OF—PROBABILITY."

"Now tell me," she said, when I had found her a seat in the tea-room and procured her what she desired, "about your books—about yourself. I have so often longed to meet you, and wondered what you were like, and——"

"A mistake," I said, as she paused. "All artists and authors ought to be known only through their works. They never—or at least very rarely—come up to the expectations formed by those works."

"Perhaps so," she said, sipping the tea and looking dreamily and speculatively at me from over the little cup. "But, all the same, one likes to have a flesh-and-blood acquaintance with them. Do you—I hope you won't think me inquisitive, but, remember, you are the first real author I have ever met—do you think when people write, they put themselves into their work? Perhaps I don't express it very clearly; but I have so often longed to know when anything has touched me, or—or come home to me as true, if the writer had felt it also? If it was experience, or sympathy, that made him say just the one thing that echoed my own feeling—brought the tears to my own eyes that surely must have been very near his own?"

"I understand what you mean," I said.

"I can, of course, only answer from my own personal experience. I could not describe a situation if I did not also feel myself—temporarily—in that situation—suffering the pain, or suspense, or joy, or fear described."

"Ah," she said, eagerly, "that is just what I feel when acting. I am not myself. I am only the part I am playing. I forget everything—everything but that. I think," she added, rather mournfully, "that is the only time I am really happy."

"You like your profession, of course?" I said, as I took the cup from her hand and put it on the table beside us.

"Yes, dearly. Otherwise I could not follow it. I always think of a sentence I read somewhere, not very long ago: 'None can give more than is in them.' I think it is so true."

"Yes," I said, gravely, "it is. But I fancy plenty of people pretend to a great deal more than is 'in' them."

"Do you go much into society?" she asked, suddenly. "I have never met you anywhere before."

"I dare say not," I said, grimly. "I am not a social person at all, and go out very little. I only came here to-night—"

"Yes!" she said, as I broke off abruptly.

"To return your handkerchief."

She looked at me; her face seemed to have lost its brightness, and colour, and grown cold and worn.

"You might," she said, slowly, "have given it to Mr. Crampton."

"Yes," I agreed. "It is one of the remarkable things of life to look back on what one 'might have done,' and speculate on the results that would have followed."

"And you remembered me; you thought about me?" she went on dreamily, as she pulled the petals of the daffodils with nervous fingers.

"Yes; I did both. Do you wonder at it?"

"Very much. Because you seem so sensible—so—so different to most of the men I have met."

"Miss Dering," I said, "your flattery is very sweet; but don't you think it is also a little—dangerous?"

"No," she said, abruptly. "We have not been conventional at all. When I said you were sensible, I meant it. Surely, for once in a way, one may speak truth without fear of being misjudged."

"If it is truth," I said, "I am more than repaid for the pain you gave me a few moments ago. You were right when you said, we had not been conventional. Somehow, I feel as if I never could be—with you."

"But how," she asked, "did I pain you?"

"You will think me a great fool," I said.

"But did you mean anything—anything special—when you spoke of Lord Veraker?"

A slow, hot flush crept up to the delicate throat and face; her eyes remained cast down.

"If I said—yes?"

For just a second or two my heart felt the quick, sharp stab of an answered dread. Of course it must be that. He admired her; he wished to marry her. Could I blame him? Could I blame her? Had she not spoken of poverty, struggle, effort! She so fair, so young, so formed to charm, and attract, and delight! Why should she not accept the gifts of fortune when they were offered her? And yet when I looked at her fair young beauty and thought of him—that satyr with his pale, fat face, and sensual lips, and blood-hot eyes—a thrill of disgust ran through me.

Oh, why was I not rich? Why had I not gold mines and diamond mines, and—well, a few more of the good things of this world to throw at her feet? Why—

Her voice broke the spell of silence once more. "How absorbed you are! Of what are you thinking?"

I rose somewhat abruptly. "Miss Dering," I said, "I am not a lady's man, and not used to the ways of society, or, perhaps, I should succeed better in convincing you that I had no feelings of any sort whatever. As it is, I can only say that, if I interpret your words aright, and if, in your youth and beauty, you are about to sacrifice yourself as so many of your sex do to a marriage that has only the advantage of wealth and position, I—I am too honest to offer congratulations. I can only say I am—sorry—for you."

She looked up. The colour had left her face again. Her eyes were dim, and shadowed by regrets that might—or might not—be real. Heaven forbid I should attempt to say.

"You cannot be more sorry for me," she said, in a low, stifled voice, "than I am for myself."

I walked home that night under the clear, spring sky, railing against fate, against life, against the chance that had led me that morning to interest myself in so simple and senseless a thing as a knot in a woman's handkerchief. To think that so small a thing should have power to alter the whole quiet tenor of a man's life!

Only that morning we had been strangers. That morning; and now—should

I ever see a spring day dawn, or catch the colour of daffodils, without a vision of a fair girl's face, and two eyes, brown, sad, soft as velvet, looking back to me, and seeming in silent eloquence to echo what the lips murmured with so pathetic a hopelessness!

"You cannot be more sorry for me than I am for myself."

It was all so strange, so foolish, so inexplicable; but, nevertheless, it was all as true as the pain at my heart, and the ceaseless memory that haunted me. She would marry Lord Vereker for his money. She would leave the stage. She would never again seem to me the vision of pure and innocent maidenhood, with the light and glory of the spring-time in her dreaming eyes, that I had idealised into a living poem.

It was all over—a brief dream, a passing fancy—and I had it out with myself under the quiet stars as I paced to and fro the Embankment, instead of going home to bed in a rational and becoming manner. Whatever there had been of romance, and poetry, and passion in my calm and undemonstrative nature she had brought to life, as suddenly, as strangely as the spring buds open at the first warm touch of sunlight.

It was useless to say that I knew nothing of her; that she might be capricious, mercenary, illogical, vain; that even if she had been free, nothing could have come of our acquaintance! Quite, quite useless. If such sensible ideas could root out the illogical senselessness of a man's or woman's love-dream, how different life would be!

There was nothing for it but to fight the battle out with myself, and then bow to the inevitable. I should not be likely to see her again; and, after all, was there not always the world before me? What was to prevent me seeking change, excitement, fortune, where and when I pleased?

Before I went home in the chill freshness of the dawn, even as I lingered to gaze on the tints of the daffodil sky, my mind was made up. I would leave England, as I had so long talked of doing; new scenes, new life, hazard and enterprise would soon knock sorrow and dreams out of my head. Life for me henceforth should be less imaginative, and become a thing of prose and facts, and hard work, and labour. I would tell no one, not even Launcelot. But, all the same, I resolved that ere a week had passed over my head, I should

have shaken the dust of my native land from off my feet, and set sail for the new El Dorado, about which men were going mad from day to day!

If I were writing a fairy-tale, how easy it would be to describe the beneficent efforts of the genius of good fortune on my behalf; for I suppose it will seem rather like a fairy-tale to say that at the venerable age of thirty-five, and in less than twelve months' time from the date of my leaving England, I was returning there with a fortune such as my wildest dreams had never pictured as a possible possession, achieved by my own personal efforts, and won by an extraordinary run of luck.

Having won it, the craving to return to the old land became too strong to be resisted. I had received or sought no news of any one there since I had left it; but now, as the murky skies and murky seas heralded its near approach, a strange feeling of longing and regret came over me.

I thought of the old life; the drudgery of the editor's office; the Bohemian suppers; the discussions of work, and abuse of critics; the daily task of cudgelling one's brains for something that might at least appear novel; of Launcelot Crampton and his artistic tastes; of—of many things that most assuredly had nothing at all to do with one persistent, irritating little memory that would try and intrude itself, and was simply and entirely nothing more sensible or important than—a knot in a handkerchief.

"She is married long ago, of course," I said to myself, with a natural suggestion of a more irrevocable knot, tied, no doubt, by Bishops or Deans, or some such high dignitaries, long ere this.

Married long ago. Was that my sigh, or the faint breath of the air on my cheek? Strange that I had not yet forgotten; strange that twelve hard, toilsome months had not been able to wipe out the record of one brief spring day!

I was in London once more, gazing at familiar streets with that odd sense of unfamiliarity produced by absence and travel. In London, in the most luxurious of hotels, and enjoying the most luxuriously simple of repasts; in London, with the dear, friendly face of the "Times" before my own, and the columns of foreign, and home, and social, and political news inviting my erratic attention.

Why did I, after all these months, turn suddenly to the theatrical column; and why, among all theatres and all pieces produced or revived, did there suddenly start out and confront me the name of one piece, and of one actress?

Answer me, scoffers at fate; for, indeed, I cannot answer for myself.

Neither can I give any clear or coherent account of rushing off to such a theatre and securing a front stall, and of sitting dazed and breathless, waiting for the envious curtain to rise and assure me I had not dreamt. That May Dering was May Dering still, not Lady Vereker, not martyred and sold for money or money's worth. Still my brown-eyed divinity, with the pure, sweet face and tender smile that, Heaven knows, had haunted my memory long, and long enough!

She saw me, and, little vain as I am, that momentary falter of voice, that flash of surprise and welcome in the brown eyes spoke eloquently enough to mine.

How long it seemed till the piece was over; how much longer till the public had wearied of calling and recalling her; how much longer before she appeared at the stage-door, with a grim and elderly maiden as chaperon, and, seeing me, told the cab that waited for her to follow slowly for a few yards, and gave me the blessed privilege of walking thus beside her, and learning she was still free.

And then I begged permission to call on the morrow, and put her into the cab and held her small, soft hand for one exquisite moment. And as I took my own way back to the hotel, I knew I envied no man on the face of the whole wide earth, for my darling's brown eyes had spoken a truth too sweet to whisper in these pages—a truth I would have faced a hundred deaths to hear, but which I might live to ask and listen to, ere the sweet spring-time had passed again into the sadness of the young year's yesterday.

THE LAST TRANSFORMATION SCENE OF THE SEASON.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

THE Professor rose majestically from his chair.

"Don't talk to me about the guidance of your senses," he said, severely; "you should guide them, not they you. If

I had my way, I would halve the senses of nine-tenths of mankind, and then people would have more than they could manage. Five senses to feed one brain! In nine cases out of ten the brain is swamped, not fed by them. It is like giving a man a team to drive before he has learnt to manage a pair!"

I had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire. In the earlier part of the evening I had convoyed a party, consisting of uncle, aunt, and country cousins, to the pantomime—the last performance of the season. Then I had crept away to enjoy a quiet cigarette over my evening paper before the conclusion of the performance compelled me to take my place as host at the head of the supper-table, and, lo, this terrible Professor had swooped down upon me, and, without any provocation on my part, had stepped into his professorial chair, and cigarette and evening paper together had had to make their obeisance to him.

This bevy of country relatives had been, if the phrase be allowed, hanging over my head for the past three years: ever since, in fact, tidings had reached my native village, in Wiltshire, that I was achieving fame and fortune for myself in London, as an electrician.

From that time, my relatives had appeared determined not to lose sight of me; and, from time to time, had revived my waning recollection of them by a series of characteristic presents.

I should add that a delicately-conveyed intimation, that not one of them had ever visited the metropolis or "seen the sights," had more than once accompanied their presents.

I kept my relatives at bay for nearly three years; then I succumbed. "Better take the draught at a gulp, and be done with it," I said to myself. So I hired a suite of rooms at "The Grand," and invited them one and all to be my guests in town for a week.

That was a hard-working week. I used to go to bed at nights more worn out than ever I had been in the early days of my office work. Not so my relatives. They showed themselves as impervious to fatigue as the wheels of the cabs which carried them through the London streets—I used to put them into cabs whenever it was possible, I found they attracted too much attention when allowed to go at large. I took a week's entire holiday on purpose to keep my eye on them; abandoned my rooms over my office, and took possession

of apartments adjoining theirs at the hotel. To tell the truth, I was rather afraid to trust them out of my sight, lest they might get into mischief; so, from morning till night, I danced attendance on their heels. On the first day after their arrival we did the National Gallery, Guildhall, St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, winding up with high tea and the theatre. From henceforth, high tea and the play afterwards grew to be an institution. Work as hard as we might all day at the sights, my relatives were always fresh and ready at night for the theatre-going.

An odd party we must have looked, as we skimmed crossings or hailed cabs in the intervals between underground railway travelling. Uncle Septimus in drab gaiters, with broad-brimmed hat pushed back from his forehead, as a rule headed our party. He was horribly near-sighted, and, being over fourteen stone in weight, I was in a constant tremor lest he might walk over somebody. Dick, aged seventeen, moon-faced and open-mouthed, straggled about anywhere—I told him to give himself up to the police if he were “lost.” Ruth was so small and so quiet, I scarcely gave her a thought; she never seemed to get into anybody’s way—that was her chief charm to my mind. I think Aunt Ju was, perhaps, the most embarrassing of the party. She had a trick of stopping in front of the chemists’ shops to look at the drugs they had on view, and, if the survey were satisfactory, she would go inside, where, sometimes, she would be more embarrassing still. But Aunt Pen was unquestionably the most attractive.

“I made up my mind that your relatives shouldn’t disgrace you among your smart London friends, Edmund,” she said, as she stood in the middle of the big platform at Waterloo Station, “so I ransacked my wardrobe, and you see the result, my dear.”

Yes, I saw the result, not a doubt, and so did other people. Twelve colours, I’m confident, came together in her toilette; and as for the cut of her garments—well, I could not have realised even Wiltshire milliners perpetrating such atrocities in the shape of bonnet and cloak, if I had not seen them.

Personally, I had no objection to her standing still in by-streets to look in at shop-windows, but I confess to having the very strongest objection to her habit of persistently backing off the kerb into the very middle of a crowded roadway

to get a view of a church-clock in order to set her watch. She was tall, and stout, and it generally took me and a policeman to bring her back. She would always mildly remonstrate with us both when safely landed on the pavement.

“Now, how am I to keep my watch exact to a minute, unless I regulate it daily?” she would say, standing still to say it. “If I were in Wiltshire, I should have the clock over the Squire’s stables. But there’s not one in all that big hotel to be depended on, and you know I keep you all true to a minute.”

Yes, not a doubt she did. Whether her watch wound her up, or she wound up her watch, I never felt quite sure; but, certainly, it was thanks to her unflagging energy that the “lions of London” saw so much of me that week, and my personal friends so little.

There were two friends, however, who refused to have their claims set on one side by those of my relatives. Those two were a widow and her daughter, with whom of late I had grown to be on very intimate terms. Now, although the mother was styled plain Mrs. Jolliffe, the daughter was known as Mademoiselle Claire Léclair; this, for the all-sufficient reason that she was studying for the stage, and was shortly to make her début at a leading theatre.

Mademoiselle Claire was a beautiful girl. She had big blue eyes, a mountain of golden hair, and the pinkest and most delicate of complexions. She delighted in wonderful costumes of sea-green tint, and greatly affected black velvet Rubens hats, with ostrich-feathers a yard long. As might be imagined, she had many admirers, and in view of the brilliant professional career which no doubt lay before her, my masculine friends were in the habit of telling me that I was a lucky fellow to have made, beforehand, such progress in the young lady’s favour.

Claire and I were on very easy, confidential terms; she would talk quite frankly to me of herself, and her hopes, and her prospects. She was not going on the stage for a living merely—“Oh no, but because she wished to enter her protest against the too prevalent idea that the theatrical profession was not one that a lady by birth and education could adopt.” It may be remarked, in passing, that her mother’s pronunciation of the English tongue occasionally left something to be desired, a fact for which Claire readily

enough accounted by the circumstance that Mrs. Jolliffe's parentage was semi-foreign, her mother having been Cingalese, and her father Irish. Be that as it may, Claire was my divinity in those days, and my offerings at her shrine made an item in my yearly income.

This, however, did not trouble me; my balance at my bankers' was good, and I considered myself amply repaid for any amount of lavish expenditure by the friendly little notes of thanks which, sometimes three or four times a week, the postman brought me, and by the pleasant little evenings which Claire and I—always with Mrs. Jolliffe as a decorous third—were wont to pass at a theatre or other public place of amusement.

Claire had a clever, sharp tongue, and a knack of hitting off people's peculiarities which was very diverting. I dare say, if her eyes had not been so soft and brilliant, and her mouth drawn into such pretty curves when she made her witty speeches, I might have detected a spice of ill-nature in them. As for instance, when she heard of the arrival of my country relatives, and begged that I would secure front seats in the dress-circle at the theatre on every possible occasion, so that she might get a good look at them from the stalls. And also, when after introduction to them at her own request, she whispered into my ear with her large eyes fixed full on little Ruth: "She looks like one of those gutta-percha toys one buys for babies, which are warranted to squeak, and which never do squeak."

As it was, however, all her speeches passed muster with me, and all her requests were law to me. And when, on the last day of my relatives' stay in town, she sent me one of her tiny notes, saying that she was dull and wanted diverting, and hoped that I would allow her and her mother to join the farewell supper, which she knew I was giving that night, I sent back immediately a delighted invitation, although I knew perfectly well what manner of diversion she expected the family party would afford.

As I sank into a comfortable chair beside the bright fire, which the coldest and most frost-biting of springs rendered a necessity, I found my thoughts running not on my warm-hearted, if somewhat eccentric, relatives, but simply on Claire, and Claire only. My evening paper lay unopened by my side, although I knew it contained the latest account of a colossal electric-car just

started in Philadelphia. I took out a pencil and note-book, and commenced making a close calculation of my yearly income—at what rate it was increasing, and whether its sum total warranted me in taking to myself so expensive a luxury in shape of a wife as Mademoiselle Claire.

"Electricity is the power of the day," I said to myself. "Those shares in the new company are bound to——" But at this moment a waiter entered the room, and informed me that a gentleman wished to see me. On the card which he presented was inscribed:

PROFESSOR OTTO VON BERGMANN,
Saint Neot's College,
Boston.

I knew what lay before me now. This Professor was a man well known in both hemispheres as a metaphysician, moral philosopher, psychologist, and I don't know what beside. He was German by birth, English by education, American by adoption, and held a chair at the Boston College, which had conferred on me an honorary degree for the impetus which I had given to the study of electricity in certain quarters.

I looked at the waiter and groaned. The appearance of that waiter is distinctly impressed on my memory from certain circumstances which followed. He was a small man, about four feet ten inches or so in height; at any rate, as he fronted me, his head was very little above mine as I sat. That head was crowned with the crispest and curliest of red hair, parted down the middle into two distinct wings. His features were nondescript, and I have forgotten them, but his height and his hair are stereotyped on my brain.

He saw my consternation.

"He's a quiet-looking gentleman, sir," he began, in a friendly tone.

And then he had to stand on one side and let the "quiet-looking gentleman" pass, for the Professor had followed his card upstairs to my room.

He was a tall, bony man, with a stoop—his head preceded his legs into the room by about a quarter of a yard; that head was not bald as so learned a Professor's ought to be, but was covered with straight, greyish hair; his nose was aquiline, his chin clean-shaven; his eyes I could not see, for they were hidden behind blue glasses. His voice was mellifluous, yes, I'll admit that, when he addressed me; my heart sank not at the manner, but at the matter of his speech.

He expressed his delight at shaking hands with a man with whom he had so many interests in common.

Those four last words struck a note of alarm. I bowed—slightly, not cordially—to express my appreciation at the implied compliment. I solemnly assert I did nothing else. Yet, before five minutes were over our heads, we were in the “very thick of it”; that is to say, he was delivering an animated oration on such light matters as perception, vision, incorporeity, with occasional side-glances at other equally frivolous topics, while I sat a mute and subjugated listener.

I tried what stolid taciturnity would do; he broke off blandly to inform me that my attention was most complimentary, and made him “warm to his subject.” Next I rang the bell, and ordered wine to be brought. He declined all refreshment; he then divided his subject into two parts, and went on more serenely than ever. I tried what a compliment would do; told him I heartily endorsed his views on subjective consciousness, and considered that he had expressed them in truly masterly fashion. Upon this he bowed most affably, said he had never enjoyed a conversation so much before, divided the second half of his subject into three parts, and proceeded to take them in their order.

Then I resigned myself to my fate, knowing that my experience of the moment had been that of many men before me.

I looked at the clock which faced me on a bracket against the wall; an hour and a half must elapse before I could hope to hear the country boots of my relatives, or Mademoiselle Claire’s light step mounting the stairs. I leaned back in my chair. “He’ll fill that hour and a half easily enough,” I said to myself; and fill it he did.

Towards the end of the second half-hour I grew horribly sleepy. I found myself beginning to sit very upright in my chair, blinking hard at the Professor.

If it had not been for that wretched drowsiness, I don’t think I should have been idiotic enough to attempt anything in the shape of the mildest of demurs to his views. As it was, what I did say escaped me unawares, and I had to take the consequences.

Floating dimly into my sleepy brain came the fag-end of one of his sentences. He was quoting his authorities—a long list of names of learned men who, he said,

were the “lights of the century,” and he bid me thank Heaven for their guidance; for, without them, thought and science would have come to a dead-lock.

I looked up at him with half-closed eyes, and said I dared say they were wonderful men, but I preferred to thank Heaven for the guidance of my senses.

Then it was that he had risen majestically from his chair, and had poured the vials of his wrath upon my head.

“The guidance of your senses,” he had repeated, severely. “If I had my way, I would halve the senses of nine-tenths of mankind, and then people would have more than they could manage. Five senses to feed one brain! It is like giving a man a team to drive before he has learnt to manage a pair.”

And then he took off his spectacles and looked at me.

I hadn’t seen his eyes before, and to this day I am ignorant of what colour they are; but, nevertheless, as they glittered at me unsheltered by glasses, I was conscious of a queer sensation down my backbone—a rigid sort of feeling, as if ossification were setting in.

I fought against the feeling. As a matter of fact, I was beginning to get exasperated. After playing the part of patient listener for so long, it was a little too bad to be “sat upon” in this way, as if I were an ignorant, self-opinionated schoolboy.

I looked up at him and said superciliously, as if that settled the question:

“Ah, now you are bringing an indictment against Nature.”

“She has indicted herself,” he replied, severely still, “by her attempt to repair the mischief she has wrought through bestowing too many channels of supply to one centre. Do you know that there isn’t a human eye in creation that hasn’t a blind spot in it?”

I began to see the mischief I had wrought, and endeavoured to repair it. Although I knew nothing whatever of the physiology of the eye, I agreed with him that there wasn’t a human eye in creation that hadn’t a blind spot in it.

The Professor went on:

“Nature, by putting those blind spots in the eye, as good as says: ‘See, I have given those foolish creatures more senses than they can manage; I will take as much as I can away, and I will begin with the sense that works hardest—sight.’”

He paused, as if expecting me to contradict him.

"Never again," I said to myself.

So he went on once more :

"But, alas, for her attempt at reparation ! Structural difficulties stood in her way. If the blind spots had fallen where they ought in the axis of the eye, a blank space—for which, no doubt, many of us would have had cause to thank Heaven—would always have existed in the centre of the field of vision. As it is, the blind spots in either eye do not correspond when the eyes are directed to one object ; and hence the blank which one eye would present is filled up by the other. You do not follow me. I will illustrate my meaning."

I assured him hurriedly that I followed him perfectly ; that necessity for illustration did not exist ; that I could recapitulate word for word every sentence of the "conversation." I did not like to say oration, for fear of giving renewed offence.

All in vain. The Professor took up the sheet of paper on which I had been making the estimate of my yearly income, then drew from his pocket a stylograph. With this he proceeded to make two small round dots about four inches apart.

"The guidance of the senses, indeed !" I could hear him muttering as he did so. "It is a truism to say : If the eye saw less we should see more."

He came close to me with the paper in his hand, and once more I was conscious of a queer sensation along my spine, which seemed now to reach to the back of my eyeballs.

"You are very sleepy, I can see," he said, fixing his hard, glittering eye full on mine ; "but, if you'll be good enough to do exactly as I tell you, you'll find out precisely where the blind spots in your eye are situated. Hold this paper close to your eyes—so ; close one eye, fix the other firmly on one black spot—so. Now I will move the paper slowly backwards and forwards. Now, tell me—the black spot on which your eye was fixed has vanished, is it not so ?"

I looked up at him.

"Vanished ? No ; it seems to have multiplied itself by ten, that's all."

He smiled—sardonically, I thought.

"We'll repeat the experiment with the other eye," he said, calmly.

And I submitted, for my will seemed gone.

When the paper had once more been moved slowly backwards and forwards before my other eye, he repeated the question :

"Has the black spot vanished ?";

And, looking up at him as before, I replied :

"Vanished ? No ; it has multiplied itself by twenty."

This was speaking well within the mark, for now, as I let my eyes rove round the room, black spots seemed swarming in all directions. Only for one moment, however ; the next, they seemed to have consolidated into two only, one of which fronted either eye.

I rubbed my eyes vigorously.

"Ah, you're sleepy," said the Professor, still at my elbow. "I'll say good night. I've enjoyed my conversation with you immensely. At some other time I shall be delighted to renew it. Good night."

I jumped from my chair with alacrity to say my good-bye to him ; but the black spots rose with me, and, though I could see the long legs and coat-tails of the Professor vanishing through the doorway, head he had none.

Well, he was gone at any rate—a little hurriedly, perhaps—but still he was gone, and that was something to thank Heaven for. But he had left his black spots behind him ; or, at least, one of them, for now the two seemed to have consolidated into one, and there it was, dancing as fantastically as ever before my eyeballs. And again I proceeded to apply vigorous friction to them.

All in vain, however. Then I closed my eyes for a few minutes, and opened them suddenly, to see what that would do. It did just exactly nothing, for, as I opened them, there was that hateful black spot exactly fronting them as before, or, perhaps, blank space would be the more correct term to use now, for, somehow, the blackness and roundness seemed to have gone out of the spot, and, instead, it appeared to be a distinct blank space in the centre of my field of vision.

I looked up at the clock on the opposite wall. Yes, there was its black marble case clearly enough defined ; there, also, the inner gilt rim which framed the dial. But where was its face ? A round blank marked out to my vision where I believed it to be.

I felt dazed. Was I awake ? Was I in my right senses ? I asked myself. What black arts had that wretch been practising on me ? Had he hypnotised me, and was I even now under the dominion of his will ? And then with a start of terror I recollected that in the course of his lengthy

oration he had more than once mentioned Dr. Charcot by name, and certain of his experiments in Paris, at which he—the Professor—had been present.

At that moment ominous sounds of movement in the lower part of the house informed me that my relatives had returned, and would shortly be upon me.

"If I tell them the truth, they'll say it's champagne, and if I don't tell them the truth, they'll say it's champagne, for I feel like an idiot, and I've no doubt I shall act like one," I said to myself, miserably.

The sounds of footsteps came nearer. With them came also the sound of Mademoiselle Claire's rippling laugh, and Uncle Septimus's guffaw in response, so I concluded that Mademoiselle Claire and her mother must have arrived at the hotel door at the same moment as my returning relatives.

I tried to comfort myself with the thought that my eyesight might return as suddenly as it had left me. Then I pulled myself together, and, like a lunatic in the first stage of his disease, I resolved to do my best to hide my malady. I walked—very erect, I'm sure, but also very unsteadily—into the adjoining room, where supper had been laid, thinking it better to receive my guests with as little ceremony as possible.

I may mention that the doorway I made for, appeared to my vision destitute of lintel, and that, as I entered the supper-room, the gaselier over the supper-table seemed to poise in mid-air.

My guests had evidently returned in a lively frame of mind, and appeared to be all talking at once as they entered the room. I shook hands with every hand that came near mine, and, I dare say, with some twice over, for already I felt in a whirl as to who was who of that merry party, not one of whom, to my vision, owned to an entire head.

"Seat yourselves at once. Pray don't stand on ceremony. I'm sure you must all be starving," I said, heartily, feeling how utterly incapable I was of according precedence to any one of that bewildering company.

"So far, so good," I said to myself, as I sank into my chair at the head of the table. "I can only hope that they have sorted themselves all right."

I turned my head to my right hand. The chair there seemed filled with an expanse of crimson silk fastened with enormous green buttons. Adown these

flowed yellow satin strings, which I had no doubt were cap-strings, although my vision failed me before the cap was reached.

"Aunt Pen; that's all right," I thought. And presently, the winding up of a watch, and the remark that she "wished to goodness the clocks in London could be made to keep right time," told me that Aunt Pen it was.

Where was Uncle Septimus? The chair at my left hand seemed filled with grey silk in very straight folds, from out which extended two small, round arms, with dimpled wrists and slender fingers. In addition, I could catch a glimpse of a round white throat and pretty, dimpled chin; but there my vision ceased.

At the foot of the table, however, a wide expanse of shirt-front and waistcoat, culminating in an enormous white tie and double chin, caught my eye, and seemed to announce the presence of Uncle Septimus.

His hearty voice, making itself heard above every other, assured me of the fact.

"I told you, Edmund, when we came in—but you didn't seem to hear me—that we had come upon a friend of yours at the foot of the stairs, and had persuaded him to join us at supper. I told him you'd be delighted to see him."

So I should, not a doubt, or anybody else, for the matter of that; but which was he, where was he seated?

"If I ask, they'll say it's champagne; and if I don't ask, and make an idiot of myself, they'll say it's champagne," I thought.

I looked carefully along both sides of the table. On Uncle Septimus's right hand a chair-full of black velvet smothered in jet beads seemed to proclaim Mrs. Jolliffe's presence; on his right hand a drab satin, primly trimmed with drab lace, seemed to demand Aunt Ju's prim, drab-complexioned face as a fit corollary. Next to Mrs. Jolliffe, a black waistcoat and coloured tie announced a masculine presence, an announcement repeated in precisely similar fashion on Aunt Ju's left hand.

At random, I bowed to the latter black waistcoat and coloured tie, and informed its owner that I was delighted to see him, and was ashamed of myself for not having recognised him as he came in.

Upon which cousin Dick's voice replied: "Thank you, Edmund, I'm sure you are; but don't apologise. You shook hands with me three times when I came in."

I felt every head at that table turned towards me.

"For severe headache, like yours, Edmund," said Aunt Ju, in an acidulated tone, "I recommend a strong dose of nux the last thing at night, and another the first thing the next morning. It is better than any amount of seltzer or soda."

And following this came a long, low laugh from where a sea-green "creation," in satin and tulle, and dazzling white shoulders, proclaimed that Claire was seated.

The laugh, lacking its usual accompaniment of brilliant eyes and flash of pretty teeth, somehow did not sound so musical as its wont.

Dick sat on one side of her; on the other was the little figure in grey, who sat on my left hand.

A very soft voice presently came from out those grey draperies, and evidently with the wish to divert attention from my blunder, said:

"Cousin Edmund, I wish you could have seen the transformation scene to-night, it was lovely."

I recognised the speaker immediately, but I had no idea, till that moment, that Ruth had such a pretty voice, no, nor such pretty arms and hands either! "She little thinks what a transformation scene I am looking at at the present moment," I thought, as I ran my eye along the ranks of my faceless guests.

I say faceless, not headless, because at certain angles I could get bewildering glimpses of the upper parts of their heads; at least where the coiffure was high, as was Claire's mountain of golden hair, and Aunt Ju's assertive speckly—*aigrette*, I think she called it. Where, on the contrary, the visage gained in breadth what the coiffure lacked in height, as with Uncle Septimus and Aunt Pen, I could get a glimpse of full-sized ears, or frilled lace lappets respectively. But no effort on my part could succeed in obtaining a view of more than this, dodge my head, or eyes, as I might.

All words are powerless to describe the odd series of sensations that swept over me as I sat there surrounded by guests, represented to my mind only by tulle or satin, shirt-front or waistcoat as the case might be.

In view of the appetites of my relatives, I had ordered supper to be served "*à la Russe*." A man at a table behind me carved the dishes, so I was spared all embarrassments on that score. I dared

not attempt to eat, however, being fearful lest my hands might not find their way to my mouth. So I leaned back in my chair watching food disappearing in all directions, but seeing never one of the mouths to which the hands conveyed it in such regular succession that one could almost have beaten time to them.

After all, and looking back to that memorable evening, I think one of the most bewildering of the many bewildering sensations I experienced was caused by the small waiter, whose head only just surmounted those of the men and women on whom he waited. Those two wings of red hair and a third of an inch of forehead was all that I could see flitting in and out between the shoulders of my guests, for his body was hidden from me by the said shoulders, and his face, like the others, was a blank to me. I could not realise that that mysterious object was part of a man. I grew almost to believe that it was some bird of ill omen flitting in and out restlessly, till it saw opportunity to pounce upon something. When he suddenly hovered over my shoulders saying, "*Champagne, sir!*" I gave a terrific start, and a "No" that went off like a cracker.

Aunt Ju's speckly *aigrette* pointed straight at me. "For the nerves, Edmund," she said, from the other end of the table, "*Gelsemium* is better than quinine—does not leave behind the dreadful buzzing in the ear that quinine does." And then Claire's laugh was heard again.

The side of the table at which Claire was seated was far noisier than the other side, which accommodated the matrons—Aunt Pen and Mrs. Jolliffe—and the "friend" brought in by Uncle Septimus, whose face was still a mystery to me. The matrons, I think, must have been very hungry, for they scarcely spoke a word, and as for my "friend" I vow that, except to say "pass the salt, please," he never opened his lips.

On the other side of the table, however, all seemed fun and light talk. Claire appeared to be "diverted" to her heart's content, and Ruth and Dick suffered accordingly. She asked Ruth for the name of her dressmaker in Wiltshire, took out a pencil and wrote it down—she was wanting dinner-dresses, she said, and her milliner in Bond Street was not satisfactory. Then she turned to Dick, told him his collars were not high enough by a quarter of an inch, that flowered silk ties were "the thing" to wear at theatres

now; bet him a dozen pairs of gloves that he could not spell her name correctly, and when he left out the accent over the e in Léclair, told him he had lost, wrote down her name and address, the size and colour of the gloves she wanted, and desired him to be sure and get them before he started for Wiltshire on the following day.

Now this was not exceptional conduct on Claire's part. Scores of times I had heard talk such as this flow from her lips; but it had never jarred upon me before as it did now. Never before, too, had her voice sounded so harsh and rasping, her laugh so unmusical. I found it difficult to realise the large, liquid eyes that laughed with the lips, the pretty, curved corners of the mouth that uttered such ill-bred phrases.

Uncle Septimus's voice suddenly roused me.

"Edmund," he said, "it is our last night in town. I want to thank you heartily for the pleasant holiday you've given us. I've seen a lot, yes; but, I don't think, quite what I expected to see. I'm near-sighted—very—and when I stood with you, Edmund, outside St. Paul's Cathedral, I never saw the cupola and cross. No, my eye never got so far——"

"Poor old gentleman, some one should have lent him a telescope," murmured Claire.

My uncle did not hear her.

"No, I haven't seen the cupola and cross; but I saw something else—something, Edmund, which I think you Londoners, possibly, are so used to that it doesn't strike you as it does us country-folk. I mean the pinched, haggard faces of the men and women——"

"And the children," put in Ruth, softly.

"Right, Ruth; and the children who throng the crowded thoroughfares round St. Paul's. And I said to myself: 'Poor souls, poor souls, over-worked, under-paid, thriving neither in body nor soul. I would to Heaven I could take some of you back with me to the green fields, and make you see sights grander even than a grand cathedral——'"

He broke off for a moment. In that moment I found it difficult to realise that the broad, jovial features which I was accustomed to call Uncle Septimus's really belonged to the man to whom I was listening now. In their stead I could picture my dead father's pale face and thoughtful eyes. Even in my uncle's voice, now, I seemed to hear the echo of my father's when he said to me, the last time he and I ever

met, "Edmund, you'll get to the front, not a doubt; but don't forget these who lag behind!"

Uncle Septimus went on:

"So also at the pantomime, to-night, I don't think I saw one quarter of what other people there saw. No, as it happened, just outside the theatre, a man came up to me and said, in a whisper, 'For Heaven's sake, give me a copper, sir, I'm starving, and I'm trying to keep my wife honest.' One did not need to look twice at the man, to see that he was speaking the truth. I've seen starved, hunted dogs with much such a look as he had in his eyes. I questioned him as to his occupation in life, and he told me that he had been a 'super' at one of the theatres, that he had been paid off a week ago, and, though he had tried hard, could get work nowhere. I gave him all the silver I had in my purse, and—well, I shall see him again. But when I got inside the theatre, somehow I didn't seem to see the smart dresses and the spangles; no, I seemed only to see the pitiful faces of the men and women——"

"And the children," again interrupted Ruth.

"Right, Ruth, and the children who wear the smart dresses and spangles, and kept wondering what they would all be doing when the pantomime came to an end, and their occupation was gone. And when the transformation scene took place, and every one was saying how lovely it was, I didn't even see it, because—because——" Here my uncle's voice gave way, he paused a moment, then finished all in a hurry. "Well, because—I'm very short-sighted, you know."

"Ah," said a voice which seemed strangely familiar to me, "you saw more than other people, because you saw less; that was it."

It was the voice of my stranger-guest. I knew him now; he was that wretched Professor who had been practising his black arts on me, and he had been sitting here at table, as my guest, enjoying my misery.

"Where is he? Let me get at him!" I cried, wildly.

I jumped to my feet; all my guests rose also, in dire confusion. I made one desperate plunge among the empty chairs, only, however, to find myself clasping Uncle Septimus's portly shoulders in a tight embrace.

I know that Ruth tells the story in a

totally different fashion. Her statement is that, on their return from the pantomime, they found me fast asleep in my chair, and Professor von Bergmann's card on a table beside me; that Uncle Septimus caught his foot in the hearthrug, overset the fire-irons, and forthwith began a series of apologies for his short-sightedness. Upon this, she says, I jumped to my feet and seized him by the shoulders, crying, "Where is he? Let me get at him!"

I always let Ruth tell her story to the end, and then I ask her, if hers be the true version of the events of that memorable evening, how does she account for the fact that, from that day forward, Claire and I have never set eyes on each other; while she and I have comfortably settled down as husband and wife?

But, for this question, Ruth never appears to have any answer ready.

MARGUERITES, MARGUERITES !

By M. BETHAM-EDWARDS.

CHAPTER I.

It was a half-holiday, the usual Thursday's half-holiday, in the Technical School for Girls, at Grand Ville-sur-Loire; and the large, bare building was deserted. Mademoiselle Blanc, the somewhat rigid, yet coquettish middle-aged directress, seizing the opportunity of wearing her new Parisian bonnet and mantle, had taken a fiacre and set out on a round of visits.

Mariette, the good-natured, giggling maid-of-all-work, who, with a very small proportion of brains, contrived to get through the work of three ordinary domestics, had slipped out for a couple of hours' gossip and flirtation.

No one was left in the big, silent house but poor little Marguerite, the resident under-teacher, and the cat, who had three kittens, to keep her company, and the perpetual excitement of the sparrows to amuse her.

So cunning were the birds, that Minette stood no more chance of catching one than of jumping to the moon. The tantalising prospect charmed nevertheless, and could she have been made to understand that throughout her entire career no sparrow should become her prey, she would have been the most miserable cat alive.

The weather was bright and inspiring. It would be difficult surely to feel low-spirited on the first real spring day; difficult

also to stay within doors, unless they were barred and bolted.

Why, then, was not eighteen-years-old Marguerite abroad? Nothing in the shape of a duty kept her at home. A young governess, accustomed to walk about alone, might ramble in the suburban meadows without comment. She would be sure to find pupils and comrades there. Why did she linger? For half an hour she had sauntered from one empty class-room to another, in a mind of wistful indecision. The sunshine and the thoughts of the daisies made her long to be in the fields; her hat, parasol, and basket were ready. Yet she looked at the clock, as if counting the minutes, and lingered on.

"The postman must be very late, or have I let him pass?" mused Marguerite. "Then there is no letter for me. Pierre has not written by this mail; something is wrong."

That monthly letter from her cousin Pierre was the only event in the girl's even life. To the imagination of the orphan—portionless and dependent on her own exertions for bread—the dim figure of the young naval officer represented a tower of strength—a haven against all future ill. Neither Pierre nor Marguerite knew exactly how the compact had been brought about; but it was an understood thing between the pair, that, some day, they were to be married. Nothing, to be called love-making, had ever taken place either by word of mouth or on paper. They had not met since childhood. But Pierre seemed the natural protector of his only uncle's only child. Perhaps a chivalrous sentiment, a sense of obligation, actuated him in thus acting the part of a protector. Marguerite, for her part, loved him; loved nothing else, she said to herself.

With a little sigh, and a half inclination to weep, at last she put on her hat and went downstairs. Yes, it was good to be holiday-making on such a day. She would not waste a whole Thursday afternoon in vain regrets.

Through the glittering streets she hastened, then, leaving the grand old cathedral behind, she turned towards the quays, with their noble avenues, palaces of rich ship-owners, and crowded masts, from which stream flags of all nations.

There is this peculiarity about Grand Ville-sur-Loire, that the forest and river have reached the very heart of the city, and between bustling wharves and shady boulevards—haunt of loungers—

runs the railway, lending still more animation to the scene. Beyond, far as the eye can reach, flows the Loire, its broad blue surface broken by many a green islet. All is here—the freshness of the woods, the stir of a great seaport, the calm beauty of a river.

Many a little steamer plied between quay and suburb; omnibuses rattled along the street in the same direction; the railway also set down passengers at the extremity of the town.

But Marguerite trudged on contentedly. She could not have walking enough on a Thursday's half-holiday, and the sight of the ships always delighted her. It recalled her sailor. Past market-gardens and orchards she hastened, till at last the meadows were reached, and the ox-eyed daisies. Daisies, daisies everywhere. She might have supposed them a precious, marketable crop, from the myriads of large gold and silver stars. Precious, indeed, they were; but in no marketable sense. Money could not buy such delights as the ox-eyed daisies gave now. The meadows were alive with merry voices, for Marguerite had been forestalled hours before.

Eager as the rest, Marguerite was soon ankle-deep in flowering grasses and daisies. With flushed cheeks, and lips parted in a smile, she first cut off the finest flower-heads for the adornment of Mademoiselle Blanc's drawing-room; then she gathered promiscuously for herself, and, seeking a sheltered nook, proceeded to wreath her hat. The daisy was her namesake and favourite flower. Not the rose itself was dearer to her. Thus occupied, and childishly intent upon the task, she took no heed of a man's voice calling her name.

"Marguerites, marguerites!" cried the intruder; but not till he was quite near, and repeated the words standing opposite to her, did Marguerite look up.

"Marguerites, marguerites!" he repeated, looking from the pretty flower-weaver to the spoils in her lap.

"Monsieur le Professeur!" exclaimed the girl, starting to her feet with a blush, and letting all her treasures fall to the ground.

Was it not beneath the dignity of an under-teacher to trim her hat with wild flowers, after the manner of a child?

"Monsieur Vincent!" she ejaculated, much as if his appearance in such a place were phenomenal. Nothing, on the contrary, was more natural. The hard-

worked Professor welcomed his weekly holiday with the zeal of his youngest pupil. To-day, the sunshine and the daisies made the middle-aged, at times discouraged, mathematical master feel ten years younger.

"Monsieur Vincent, and why not?" he said, smiling, at the same time putting his hand in his pocket and eyeing her a little mysteriously. "But, to tell you the truth, Mademoiselle Marguerite, I have been running after you. See how heated I am!" His right hand still fumbled in his outer pocket. "The fact is," he added, "hardly had you quitted the house when I happened to be passing by and met a great, a very great friend of yours. Guess what he gave me for you?"

That sea-letter, arriving so regularly, was no secret to the orphan's protectors and well-wishers. Mademoiselle Blanc, Monsieur Vincent, daily lecturer in geometry, and one or two others, all knew what this little Marguerite's future was to be. The pale, slender girl, beautiful by reason of her large, dark, pathetic eyes, was a general favourite, and all wished a joyous sequel to these foolish dreams.

The Professor would occasionally venture upon a little jest, if the monthly missive failed to appear; would predict Pierre's forthcoming marriage with some dusky beauty of the South Sea Islands, and tease her by a dozen stories in point.

"It was the postman. You have my letter!" she cried, with cheeks aflame, and glistening eyes. "Oh, I feel sure you have my letter!"

"What will you give me for it? All those daisies?" he asked, as he slowly produced the treasure.

Yes; it had come, the accustomed ship-letter; and, as she fondly persuaded herself, bulkier than usual. Her face became radiant. Without heeding the playful query, without so much as a word of thanks to the kind bearer, she caught the joy-gift from his hands, and leaving hat, daisies, and parasol by his side, hid herself in a little copse close by, there to devour her lover's letter.

CHAPTER II.

THE Professor watched these movements smiling, not without impatience. He had no desire to spend the whole afternoon in the meadow; he had, indeed, projected a ten miles' walk across country. But she had evidently left him in charge of her

belongings. It would not be polite, it would not be friendly to abandon them; whilst, to intrude upon her solitude at such a moment, was quite out of the question. So, resigning himself to the situation, he took off his straw hat, manipulated a cigarette, produced the "Journal des Débats," and began to read.

He was an ardent politician, and the state of public affairs just then was absorbing; yet, somehow, he found his thoughts apt to wander. Finally, the journal was thrown aside, and a second cigarette twisted into proper shape.

"What a long time that little girl is over the reading of her letter, and what a foolish business is the writing of love-letters!" mused the Professor, not to-day in his happiest, most contented mood. The spring made him feel old, and he yearned to feel young. It was not so very long since he had seen his fortieth birthday. He was really in his prime; yet a gulf seemed to separate him from that joyous girl in the copse.

Then his thoughts went back to another spring day—many and many a year ago—a day on which he had felt buoyant and youthful as Marguerite herself. The hopes that had made him in love with life then, the rapturous looking forward, the ineffable trust, these were dead as last year's leaves. No sun could resuscitate them. Would this be her fate also: such fond illusion, such painful awakening to the truth?

Had the heart prophecies of the early days come true he should not now be sitting there, a lonely, unloved, loveless man, a solitary unit in the great human family; an individuality without close-knit ties and fireside sympathies. Family life would have been his, perhaps the clinging love of children, the unspeakable looking-forward of fatherhood.

But why spend time in thinking of these things? He enjoyed the respect of his townfolk, an honourable position, the friendship of estimable men and women, a considerable amount of well-being, immunity from care. Was not that a portion far above his deserts; enviable in the eyes of many?

"But this little girl is past all bearing with," he said to himself at last; and springing from his seat, still unwilling to break upon her solitude, he repeated: "Marguerites, marguerites!"

Growing more impatient, and, if the truth must be confessed, just a trifle out of temper, he again shouted her name, and again with-

out success. Really he could not help it, he must disturb her now; the first spring holiday of the year was half wasted already. Collecting the scattered objects, and carrying his armful as best he could, dropping now her hat, now the bunch of flowers, now the basket, and stooping to pick each up with a little exclamation of annoyance, after several halts, he reached Marguerite's shady covert.

But on the threshold of the little glade, set round with hazel-trees and eglantine, he drew back in astonishment. Instead of springing forward to meet him, blushing, tearful with joy, Marguerite lay on the ground in a passion of grief, her face buried in her hands, sobs choking her utterance, whilst scattered to the winds, tossed hither and thither, were the several sheets of that eagerly longed-for, rapturously-received ship-letter.

The conviction immediately flashed across the Professor's mind. His playful prediction was then verified. Marguerite's dream-lover had played her false!

He threw down his burdens, and was at her side in a moment.

"Come," he said, very kindly, but unable, for the life of him, to regard the matter in a tragic light, "come. Has our little Marguerite no moral courage? Is she a child, to break her heart over a lost toy?"

Her first impulse was to rise, and hide the scattered sheets from his sight, to keep her terrible secret; but a sense of over-weening desolation, an unutterable craving for sympathy, got the better of timidity and reserve. And Monsieur Vincent had ever been her kindest friend. She felt sure that he would respect her confidences.

Withdrawing one hand from her burning, tear-wet eyes, she pointed to the papers.

"Read, read!" she murmured, still weeping bitterly.

Now, if there was one task above all others wearisome to the poor Professor, it was the reading of closely-written manuscript. His eyesight had been much tried, and was no longer so good as it might be. He felt daily and hourly the necessity of economising that most precious possession. The young sailor's letter consisted of three sheets of note-paper, of extra size; the small, crabbed writing covered each page. To peruse such an epistle from beginning to end would occupy at least half an hour—another precious half-hour of his fast-waning holiday! Marguerite had ever

interested him. But he was a hard-worked man, a lover of the country, condemned to sedentary occupations. Even for Marguerite's sake he did not feel inclined to sacrifice his ten miles' walk.

"I will read your letter another time, this very evening," he replied, putting the sheets together. "You and I, Marguerite, do not get a holiday every day. Let us enjoy it when we can, in spite of little rebuffs."

"Read, read!" she cried, more passionately than before. "I shall never enjoy anything again. My life is spoiled; my heart broken."

"That is surely going too far, whatever may have happened. Come, my child, listen to a reasonable word. Be guided. Let us talk as we continue our stroll."

"Read, if you care for me at all; do read what Pierre has written," she pleaded in a desperate voice.

In order to soothe her, he took out his spectacles and glanced at one page after another. Judged from a man's standpoint, from the standpoint of older and more experienced women also, the young sailor's conduct was hardly to be called blameworthy.

He wrote in a straightforward, manly, respectful strain. The indefinite engagement had now gone on for many years, he said, and might go on for many more. Meantime, he saw no prospect of revisiting home; none whatever of promotion, which, in his case, meant the possibility of marriage. He had long felt it a duty first to her, then to himself, to break off a compact entered upon almost in childhood. His life was that of a rover; even if they knew each other well and the fondest attachment existed between them, he had no right to bind her to such a destiny. His cousin Marguerite was then free. Heaven grant that she might be loved and happy!

Such was the substance of the letter, gathered by the impatient Professor in about five minutes; Marguerite watching his face as he read. Without a word he very coolly folded the sheets, replaced them in their envelope, and handed it to her.

"Oh! is it not heartless, cowardly, cruel? If only I were a man and could meet him in duel!" she said. "'Marguerite,' he begins, 'dear, my very dear Marguerite.' How happy I was when I began to read, never dreaming of what would follow! And now he loves somebody else—I am sure of it—he would not

have cast me off else; and I am all alone in the world. I belong to nobody."

That childish outburst melted the Professor at last. He forgot his contemplated walk; his impatience, even touch of ill-temper, vanished in a moment. Carried away by a sudden impulse, bent only on comforting his favourite, wholly disconcerted by the pathos of those large, beautiful eyes, he now raised the weeping girl and kissed her on the brow.

"Nay," he said, "you belong to your friends who love you, Marguerite. You belong to me!"

No sooner was the deed done, those fond, foolish words uttered, than the Professor realised his dilemma. He had gone too far to draw back. The lover-like kiss, the still more lover-like speech, were irrevocable. Not only was his half-holiday forfeited, but something far more serious, his liberty.

But instead of being overcome by this conviction, however, he found himself growing bolder and bolder. It all became clear to him, his interest in the under-teacher, his readiness to afford her little pleasures, the alacrity with which he had followed her this afternoon. He owned now that only Pierre's image, Pierre's ship-letter had prevented him from speaking out before. Pierre was a phantom lover; but he loved her indeed.

"You cannot care for me as he did—as I thought he did," sighed Marguerite. "I am a mere child in your eyes. You kissed me just now because I seem a child to you."

"Listen, Marguerite," he said. "If you will dry your eyes and come with me, I will tell you my own story—much such a story as yours. You will understand then that I do not regard you as the little Marguerite of old. I, too, belong to nobody. Why should we not belong to each other?"

And at last the Professor did set off for his holiday walk; but Marguerite with him, Marguerite's little hand within his arm, as they threaded the country lanes; he telling her of his early life, and the disappointment that had clouded it. She forgot her own sorrows in sympathising with his; she was drawn from a world of unrealities to facts; from the dream-love beyond the sea to the true, sturdy friend at hand. A very long walk it was; and many a halt they made, now listening to the thrush and the blackcap, now gathering wild flowers and cowslips. He felt the yearned-for sense of youthfulness come

back; she was conscious of a newer, better wisdom since yesterday. That spring holiday, spoiled as they first thought for both, was to be the beginning of the true spring-tide of life, the first awakening to a pure, strong, and tender love!

SYBIL GRANT'S ROMANCE.

By MARIA L. JENKIN.

CHAPTER I. THE ARRIVAL.

JUST a little knot of rose-red wild cyclamen-blooms.

They were lying in an opened piece of tissue-paper; and the paper lay resting on a girl's lap. Her fingers played lovingly with the warm-hued, fragile flowers, and she smiled. While she was smiling the oddest thing happened—two shining tears ran over and down her cheeks; one of them fell prosaically on to the tissue-paper, making a momentary pool, and was absorbed.

The girl grew rosy; a little flush, as of anger, awoke in her eyes; surely her grief was of the sort typified by that rapidly absorbed tear!

She twisted up her cyclamen-blooms, but she did not throw them away heedlessly. They went carefully into a box, and the girl, ruffling her fingers through her brown hair, went to the open lattice-window, and leaned her arms on the ledge.

A sweet, summer-smiling country was before her. An old vicarage garden, an older church, then a shining river and green hills far and away.

The sun was lowering, but he was scorching, too; it was an August afternoon—the time when poetry becomes the most luscious of prose, and one's very soul exists in a land where it "is always afternoon."

Another, but as hot a sun was shining, and a younger month was reigning—April.

Ay, but an April grand and glorious. With the dust of the roads of La Cava reaching up to its proverbial height, and whitening coats, and hats, and boots, and even making the brown-skinned children, who tumbled about the horses' feet, dust-coloured.

An hour ago a train had come in; and the big, fashionable hotel was settling down, in the energetic southern way, to its business of entertaining nigh upon a

score of fresh visitors—Roman residents, who were turning tourists for a spell.

After them had come the biggest and shabbiest carriage of all the hackney-carriages of La Cava. It had nothing to say to the new hotel; loftily turned its shabby old back upon it, and, amidst a very whirlwind of dust-clouds that itself had created, turned round away from the main road up the Via Santa Serafina.

The Via Santa Serafina was the town end of a country road; and the townish end of it was passed in no time, and the country road was reached, with its dirty white way and its dirty white walls with the long-armed cactus growth atop. The sun had been so hot for a week or two, that lizards were lazily dragging their pointed tails in and out of the wall-crevices.

The lumbering old carriage turned in at the gateway of the *Hôtel Svizzera*. Advisedly do we write gateway instead of gate, for the old iron gate had not been used within the memory of man; in fact, it swung back on an unintended mass of cactus and myrtle, saved from total prostration by one hinge instead of two.

The broad steps of the "*Svizzera*" showed at once a portly, brown-haired, smiling padrona. She had been born in Switzerland, but had, when a pretty chambermaid, married an Italian. She had never been back to the Alps, and took Vesuvius for her King, and the mountains of Calabria as a quite satisfactory compensation for Alpine glories. She was sixty now, and had a fame as being the best padrona of the best really Italian hotel in all southern Italy. It need not be said that Fusco, her husband, was secondary; still, a man is useful, he can see to the carriages, and mules, and asses the forestieri want.

Now to catalogue the arrivals by the big carriage. They were Mr. and Mrs. Mason, from Bedford, their son, John Mason, law-student, their two daughters, Ida and Bridget, also their niece, Sybil Grant from Long Wootton, Surrey.

There was no particular history attaching to any one of the party. The Masons were wealthy folk who had wintered in Rome. Sybil was their guest, and John, their son, was taking a month's holiday, feeling himself entitled thereto because he had accomplished the fact of passing an examination.

An hour after the arrival a huge bell was heard ringing. That meant dinner. Then, advancing from opposite doors, from the

sunlit, untidy garden, running down a broad old staircase open to the courtyard, and the balcony of entrance, there might be seen the gathering of motley folk from the far ends of the earth.

This gallery, or balcony of entrance, was broad and long; one cannot make comparisons between things so unlike, and yet it took the place at the "Swizzera" of what one would call the hall of an English house.

Marianda, a buxom country wench, was ringing the bell, another stood servant-like at the door of the dining-room. Both were uncapped, and their black hair was plaited voluminously and fringed alarmingly to their very eyebrows; Giacomo, a third servitor, stood by the side of 'Cesca.

The Signora Fusco herself bowed and stood to introduce the new-comers to the dining-room.

"How funny!" Ida whispered.

"What a room!" was Bridget's reply.

The napery was white as snow, but coarse, and the servants—just the three we have named; the girls in their short skirts and their bright-hued kerchiefs on their shoulders, with their big silver earrings in their ears, and the strings of glass beads round their brown throats.

But the dinner—perfection; and the coffee, in the little blue cups, to finish up with—better than perfection!

Some Italian gentlemen were at one end, evidently the guests of an old velvet-capped Cavaliere, who might have been the father of the province, so patriarchal did he look, and so courtly was his bow as he entered and gave his greeting, "Signore."

A week went by.

The Masons drove about. They went to Salerno and Postum; they went to Amalfi; the young ones walked and wandered among the vineyards and orange gardens. Ida sketched, and then would have 'Cesca sit to her.

'Cesca was very pretty, and she had already sat to two artists, real artists; so in her heart of hearts she felt a bit lofty and gracious in turning model for the signorina, who was not making her nearly as handsome as the Signor Americano had done.

"The Signor Americano!" 'Cesca cried, jumping up from her pose against the wooden railings of the balcony.

All the world was out of sight, and Ida had 'Cesca all to herself. She had got in the girl's head, and she was painting in the orange bough which sent the sharp shadows on 'Cesca's white sleeves.

"Bother!" Ida was angry with her model; shy at the advent of the artist, who must pass her to get to the kitchen where the padrona was to be found, angry and rebellious at criticism, which she hated. "I cannot paint any more, to-day," she cried. "The shadows are all too sharp. Come earlier to-morrow."

"Sì, signorina, sì! But—the padrona!"

'Cesca preened herself as the tall young American passed, and studiously avoided the smallest glance at his rival artist or her canvas.

"I'll manage the padrona." If Ida Mason did not appreciate criticism, far less did she like to be ignored. Was that American an incipient Raffaele, that he should ignore a sister of the brush?

CHAPTER II. THE RIDE.

IDA then betook herself to the bedroom—huge, and opening on to a terrace as big as the below-stairs balcony—which she shared with Sybil.

Sybil was out, of course. Sybil always was out. But Bridget, sitting in the shadow which the old house cast on its own terrace, was writing a letter—Bridget had special letters which must get posted on special days.

"Another American!" Ida declared, "and an artist to boot."

"And he has been giving you a lesson?"

Bridget looked up. The pleasure of her letter was in her eyes, and her words, which might have had a sting in them, were made sweet.

"Not at all. That is a pleasure to come; he ignored me!"

New voices were heard coming along the hidden road—laughing voices. In three minutes the old garden was a very garden of girls, with only John Mason for guardian.

Four were American girls, the fifth was Sybil Grant. She, careless that she was, took off her big straw hat as she walked up round the laurels and myrtles, and fanned herself. A basket of violets, and anemones, and red cyclamen from the woods hung in one hand; the spring midday blazed hot, but it exhaled the sweet scent of violets and fresh green things.

"Are you mad, Syb? You'll be getting a sunstroke," Ida cried, leaning over the balustrade of the terrace, her own head sheltered by a huge scarlet umbrella.

"Not I."

And the big ball ended everything in the

way of talking, for the midday meal was ready.

The "Signor Americano" — otherwise Martin B. Slater, of Boston—sat next to Sybil, and when he appeared was greeted by some half-dozen folks as an old friend.

The old Cavaliere di San Rocucci poured forth a glad, warm welcome, and, as once again his two compatriots were visiting him, turned in his graceful old-gentlemanliness and introduced them.

One was "Il Conte Castello," the other, "My Nephew Cesare."

Somehow—perhaps by the brotherhood of the English tongue—the English and Americans had made a daily clique. Here was another American, and an irresistible link with two young Italians.

"And we'll keep to our plan," Patience Markham, a New Englander, said. "Mr. Slater," she cried, "we'll be invading the monks of Corpo la Cava this afternoon. Will you come? Donkeys are at a premium. Demetrio declares he has to pay lire uncountable, for he has not enough of his own for us all."

"Certainly I will go. Where is Demetrio? 'Cesca, where is Demetrio?'"

"Ah, signor, do I follow Demetrio when he works? Giacomo—seek."

'Cesca was imperious.

There was the planning of a ride, and by three o'clock such a string of donkeys as filed away from the "Swizzera" was not often seen even in donkey-riding La Cava.

Along the winding, dusty road, with the grey greenery of olives, and dusted cactus hedges, with the high, cloudless, blue sky above, with the heat-befilmed distance of blue mountains around. Then the road roughened, and great boulders came strewing the wild luxuriance of foliaged bank, and hollows, and so-called path.

Next, the grand, mysterious turnings of a ravine hid one rider from another, then brought quaint and curious groupings of folks together—a donkey with four feet on a few inches of rock, a donkey with four feet straddled over widest space in a gasping scramble for foothold.

All at once came a trumpet note, a bray, as of rebellion, from the lowermost, at seeing his brethren of burthen high aloft above his head.

A long laugh answered.

So much for the fun of the climb—a veritable climb.

A rush of foaming water poured down from the heights above, sweeping over curtains of fern—iridescent, dancing water

that shone over rocks, and tree-trunks, and splashed jewels of a thousand hues upon ash, and larch, and plane-trees. Sober laurels gleamed in the shade, gold of prim-rose, scarlet of anemones, purple and red of violets and cyclamen carpeted with flowery loom the ever-lifting land.

"More flowers! Jack, I do not care if I am left behind, and never catch you up. I must have some."

Sybil had made some milder attempts at flower-gathering—she was a flower-worshipper—but her cousin had snubbed her, and ordered her to remain on the back of her beast.

"Stuff! they'll not wait," was Jack's reply.

"Signorina, permit me." And round a bend from above there came a grey donkey's nose, a grey, bestriding figure, and a glad, excited, rejoicing, olive face.

It was! the very handsome Cesare, nephew of old Rocucci. He had much experience of mountain-paths on donkey-back, so deftly ordered his steed up a perpendicular bit, letting John Mason pass him, then down the perpendicular bit he came gallantly, and was at Sybil's service.

Cesare di San Rocucci was, to use the hackneyed phrase, "like a Greek god." He was of the Naples province; his family claimed to date from far times of old. No doubt his ancestors had a drop of Greek blood in them, for their home was where the old Greeks had held sway. So, as a fact, he had the clear-cut Greek beauty.

In a moment, before her cousin's figure was out of sight, Sybil was gathering posies by the handful, and Cesare helping. The tethered donkeys reposed, munching dock-leaves in peace.

What the two said, would perhaps not be worth writing down. Cesare could not speak fluent English, so he slipped into many Italian words Sybil was not quite sure of. But she was sure of a good many words, and being a girl of spirit, talked her very best Italian, so as to show her companion she understood a great deal.

Cesare then governed his tongue; but he insisted upon it, that she spoke Italian so well, she must always speak to him in his own tongue.

"That is lazy of you!" she cried.

"Ah! then it is laziness, I will indulge. Is it not sweet to hear—"

"Not at all," came in dignified English.

"What did I say? Ah, I will learn English, that then I may say what my soul feels in the strange, difficult tongue."

Sybil laughed.

"We must not gather any more flowers," she said.

"No! But you will like to have more!" The young man did not feel prosaic, so how could he look so? "The best I see above. I will gather them."

"No."

But he was up the bank, and his hands red in the burning effulgence of a mass of wild cyclamen.

His dark eyes were aglow as he sprang down to her side. The bronze hue of his face seemed paled over with some sort of excitement, and he fell on one knee, giving Sybil the bunch he had gathered. With as natural an impulse he touched his lips with the flowers before he put them into her hand.

"Oh! let us be quick and join the others!" Sybil cried.

She was a bit afraid. But she showed nothing but the brightest of gaiety and gladness. Nay, she seemed possessed with a furore of gaiety for the rest of the afternoon, and she bewildered the old priest who showed the treasures of the convent of Corpo La Cava. She devoted herself to Demetrio on the ride home, talked about 'Cesca to him, promised to go and see his old mother.

But to Cesare she was just sweetly dignified and distant.

Yet the spring went by, and she was at home.

It was golden autumn, and she was just a quiet girl, in a quiet English rectory, looking out dreamily over a smiling country on an August afternoon.

The bunch of cyclamen she had saved were out of the big bunch Cesare had kissed.

CHAPTER III. THE ROMANCE.

SYBIL'S life was a life of no note. It is said that such are the happiest lives.

Alexander Grant, her father, was one of the Grants of the county, and the living of Long Wootton had been held by a Grant from time immemorial. By consequence, Sybil, his one daughter, was afloat on the sea of county society, and was a girl who was expected to make her mark on that society. How can we describe her? She had a bright, fair beauty of her own; and when she appeared at any gathering, some electric light and verve touched folks. She was a girl of spirit, and there was a

spring of vigour and life in the way she did things. In her parish work she was idolised; but not in the way that a saint gets idolised. No; not that at all. The old folks knew that Miss Sybil would see their cottages would get the repairs they asked for, and the boys and girls knew that if only Miss Sybil chose to join then she could race as well as any—ay, and play cricket as well as any.

And for such a girl to have a romance—a hopeless, forlorn romance, as it would be if she was going to sigh away her brave woman's love for a distant, lost, never attainable young Italian gatherer of woodland blossoms!

She was the Rector's daughter. Mrs. Grant, her mother, seeing in the future the inevitable curate-lover so plainly shadowed forth, talked much motherly worldly wisdom to the Rev. Alexander.

But, like a man, he chose his curate from a wholly rectorial point of view—the young nobles and the sons of wealth were no good to him only for their nobility or their wealth. He forgot to think of his wife's wisdom.

But Fate had befriended Mrs. Grant. The climax had come; the lover had declared himself; and he was none other than the Hon. Cyril Cava.

And Sybil said him "Nay."

Long Wootton was astonished; and the Caves, and the whole of the Earl's family were something more than astonished.

Sybil was blamed.

The blame came to her ears, and roused the fiery spirit in her. What do people mean by saying she had "encouraged him?" She had been polite—was she to be bearish to the curate? She never had been anything but kind and she never would be. Mr. Cave was decidedly too self-satisfied.

So a time of discomfort had been lived through.

By Sybil, somewhat haughtily. But living in Yorkshire had fallen into the lover's lap, and he had gone away. He had given utterance to views in favour of celibacy of late; but Mrs. Grant scorned his so rapid change of ideas, and the Rector smiled his genial "pooh, pooh!"

And a married curate, with three young babies, and a sweet wife, was at T. Cottage, the place of Sybil's delight.

This was the halcyon time of August when we see Sybil sunning herself in the afternoon rays. She had come in for tea in the curate's nursery, had slipped

"has Ida sent the colour of the sashes?" Ida Mason was to be married in a fortnight.

"No—no letters ever come from Bedford by the midday post."

"Of course not. I shall have to telegraph if none come to-night. She ought to have sent it, by John, on Monday. Well, he may come to-night?"

It was a Tuesday, and John Mason had never shunned Long Wootton; of late, too, in the hurly-burly of wedding preparations, he had many a time run down to dinner, bringing messages.

So it happened. John did come down, and did bring a letter with a bit of silk, primrose-hued, in it.

After early breakfast the next morning, he was off again to "grind," as he called it.

A fortnight after the snow had gone; ominous bits lying only in corners, "waiting for more," as country folks say. A bright February sun was shining, as befitted the day of a happy bride; crocuses opened golden, and purple, and white heads to the welcome warmth; a mild, soft air was making the most of himself, as if taunting the March that was to come, and the suburb of Bedford, where the Masons lived, was alert over the first gay wedding of the year.

The deed was done; Ida Mason was Ida Mason no longer, but Mrs. Martin Slater.

John Mason, and one or two others, had seen the new husband and wife off by the London train. The crowd of folks invited for the afternoon reception were drifting away.

These drifted and drifted, and thereupon came the emptiness which is the fag-end of a wedding-day.

It was not to be altogether emptiness. Sybil, on some quest for cake, or white satin ribbon, or postage-stamps, went into the morning-room, and there found John kicking his heels—irresolute, idle?

Stay—not one word of these fitted him; yet he looked each one of them.

"I am sorry for you, Jack!" Sybil cried.

"Sorry! Are you?"

Then John fell silent. The next moment he changed. He turned full round facing Sybil. Fire and decision were in his bearing, and then came—a clear and definite proposal.

"Oh, John!" the girl gasped.

That brought only a stream of more fiery lover's language, full of masterful gladness, yet prosaic and business-like withal.

"Oh, John!" came again, and Sybil's glad face drooped.

"You knew it, surely?"

"Indeed, no!"

"You don't mean you don't like me!"

"Oh, I like you so much, Jack! But not that. It does not seem possible——"

"Then, if you like me, is not that enough? It would not be natural for you and I to go into rhapsodies over each other as Ida and Slater do. We've known each other always. You are not perfect."

Sybil winced involuntarily.

"And I am not perfect—a long way off being perfect, I know." The masterfulness of John's love was waning, then it braked up into life again. "But I'm a pretty good sort of fellow, after all—and I know just the house you would like, Sybil."

"No—no." She shrank still nearer the door.

Perhaps that shrinking nettled him.

"Why is it? Why?" he said with irritation. "Who is it? Who is there——"

"John! How dare you? There is no one. But do you think I will marry for the sake of marrying? I know—every girl must know—that marriage without love is wicked, wrong—and love is something quite—quite"—she flushed rosy, and all her spirit came to her help, and abode in the brave true light of her eyes—"quite different. I have not got it. Perhaps you have not either, John!"

"I swear——"

"Oh, hush, John!"

"Bah! I swear I love you!"

He was quite angry, and paced the room.

Her spirit did not again fail her; so she stood, and would not fly ignominiously.

Perhaps he took that quietness for relenting. To a degree he calmed himself.

"Let it be, Sybil," he said, with masterfulness still, but with no brightness. "Let it be, now. In three months—six months—no, three months, I'll come again——"

The wedding-day was spoiled for Sybil. Naturally so; and yet she quite prosaically and wisely told herself that she ought not to be made miserable by this contretemps. Of course she could not promise herself to John, or to any man under such conditions of coldness as she was experiencing.

How different love was! How different in what she had seen of it in Ida, for

instance. How different, too, was Patience Markham.

Life looked a bit dreary. She was sorry for John—very sorry. She would have done anything else for him. It might—so was she saddened in her self-communings—be right that she should try to love him—not as a cousin, but—as a wife.

All girls could not be blessed alike—oh no!

Poor Sybil! Unconsciously she was fighting for her sweet maiden's right of the romance of love, and against this she was consciously, cruelly reasoning to herself about the duties of the prose of love.

John went back to law work on the following morning, and then the bright, elastic spirit of the girl felt a momentary relief. But she stayed for a week at Bedford, and it seemed that all at once her eyes were opened to family hopes and desires.

She was quite sure that every single Mason had prejudged her John's wife, and would be grieved at any unlucky stroke fate might deal against such a consummation of family wishes.

Sybil was glad to go home; glad to meet the fierce blasts of March wind, for the wind was a lusty antagonist she could brace herself to fight against, and rise elastic from the fight.

So March blew himself away, and Sybil was none the worse for his winds. But her spirit was the worse—the tamer, for the sure, passive, still hopes of those very kind Masons.

Mrs. Grant wondered, in ignorance. She saw that Sybil was feeling Wootton dull, at least, growing older and knowing dullness. So she, good mother, found the white April days lag, and made much ado early over the new dresses Sybil would have to get for her launch into London society.

CHAPTER V. THE REALITY.

MAY was in. London was glorifying itself under crowns of flowers. The May of our late degenerate earth had had the try for mastery; but for that year he was wholly out of the field, and the May of the poets reigned. And if over the meads the hawthorn-buds made roseate summer snow, then, in London, there was the kingly, million-hued mantling of flowers for the gay state of fashion.

The Park was crowded with carriages; the old streets of fashion were a block;

the picture-galleries were a series of blocks.

And into one of these, the latest new-consecrated gallery of fashion, a lady and three girls went one May afternoon.

The lady was Lady Emma Grant, wife of Squire Grant, of Wootton, the girls were her two daughters, and our friend Sybil. They had not been in long before they met John Mason. May Grant also was soon found by a middle-aged Colonel Sale. But Colonel Sale had, for the past week, been seen wherever May Grant had been seen.

The party became separated naturally; but the division held some degree of cohesion, for all simultaneously completed the round of the first room.

"There is a pretty dress," said Sybil.

"I don't like the colour, dear," Lady Emma answered.

The said costume was of silk, in terracotta shades, ranging from the mass in pale, to accessories in ruddy red. The wearer was a dark girl—a typical southern beauty, and she and her dress made a picture of tropic sunlight and burning shadow.

"No," Lady Emma went on; "it's old-fashioned. I have a gown of my grandmother's just the same. Hideous!"

"We never shall convert you, Lady Emma."

"No, my dear—no, I can't say I admire guys. There is another one for you."

Then they went down the few shallow steps of the first room, and standing at ease, so to speak, in the fine entrance-hall.

Lady Emma was tired of pictures; she elected to sit and "look at guys," she said, with a sparkle of her bead-like black eyes at Sybil. So she sat comfortably enjoying herself in her brown satin of unfashionable shade, wearing her faultless lemon-colour gloves and fanning herself with a huge black fan.

"You'll not see any!" was Sybil's shot.

"Go away."

Margaret was waiting; John Mason was midway between her and Sybil, then all went out of sight.

"Slater's picture must be in this room."

"Yes," Sybil knew exactly where to look for it.

As Sybil stood gazing at Slater's picture, her face paled. She did not look long; she even suddenly moved away, and as she moved the smile was gone from her lips, and without it her face bore a look of grave seriousness it had only worn of late.

Turning into the crowd she brushed the

sunny silk of the beautiful dark girl. In so doing she separated her from the gentleman who was with her, supposedly, her father.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" Sybil's grave face smiled as she involuntarily spoke.

The dark gentleman gravely lifted his hat.

"Signorina," he said, bowing. The speech of each one was that of impulse.

There was nothing more of note to Sybil in the gallery. She did not appreciate the pictures her cousin told her she ought to admire.

"I am so self-willed," she laughed. And she carried herself and her catalogue along independently.

And with an air of command, so John took it, she silently ordered him to leave her and attend Margaret Grant. For herself, she felt she could not have endured the presence of John patiently. She was bringing herself to see that he quite meant the renewing of his proposal, and the three months of grace would be up in less than a week. She would then change her "No" into "Yes." A stoical, miserable "Yes," but—why should she rebel? John was very good, and every one wished this thing.

Only—only—just at that moment, with the sight of 'Oessa's picture, with the hearing of that unexpected one Italian word, she felt that John was hateful—hateful!

These moments of utter and entire rebellion do come to us—

For that afternoon Sybil made herself free; she soon set her back on pictures, and sat with Lady Emma. At least, Lady Emma would keep her wholesomely in the present, she was a very genial old person, and enjoyed her annual London season quite as much, as her girls did. She ridiculed heaps of things; was violent against some others; but the house in Manchester Square was, nevertheless, always kept up to the latest style, and her people had to carry out their service in the latest details of the latest mode.

On that night there was a reception at Manchester Square; on the next night, a fancy ball; on the following, a dance at an ambassador's. So the time went.

Some joke had made Sybil declare she would be a sibyl; so, a sibyl she was, robed in a mantle of saffron colour, and with a circlet of ruddy gold confining the coils of her wayward brown hair.

At one time the sibyl sat by a Neapolitan peasant—curious juxtaposition.

"Your dress makes me happy!" she cried, putting her hand on the thick, gay, woollen skirt of the girl.

Then a sudden gleam of recognition flashed into her eyes: it was the sunny girl of the picture-gallery.

"Truly?" The word was a translation, and the next words were spoken with a very marked accent. "Then I am happy that I make pleasure for you. It is only the dress of my peasant sisters."

"Yes." For dear life, Sybil, at that moment, could say no more; she scarcely fitted her strong-minded impersonation.

"And you; you make the queen of the room, it has been said to me. My father said it, my cousin said it." The girl's dark eyes beamed admiration.

"Oh, what nonsense! I am a bundle! I cannot waltz a bit. Do you remember me? I was so rude as to push against you."

"Ah, yes! And I could not remember. Your face I knew; but there is so much"—she spread her pretty hands abroad—"so much that is different!"

She ended with a laugh.

There was no time for more, for John Mason came up and said Lady Emma was in a fidget to go. It was late, so on, so on.

And the majestic sibyl floated away on the arm of a British tar.

Again—another momentary scene.

It was in the rooms of an Embassy. Stars of the highest orders of Europe; decorations bestowed by mighty Princes dazzled one's eyes. Diamonds flashed as beautiful women moved. Royalty was present; and to hear the names of the guests made one feel that history was alive, and the past was a real thing for living hands to touch.

Quite late there came a stir, as if some people of note were arriving. Where Sybil Grant stood she could see well.

A murmur of names in the voices of servants got drowned in the wordless buzz of the crowd. But a syllable caught Sybil's ear, and it was the soft vowel-ending of Italian.

At the same moment, a tall, dark man, with his closely-cut hair iron-grey, his breast a mass of orders, and his whole bearing princely, entered the room.

It was the Prince X. Y. Z. in London, and staying at the Embassy.

On his arm was a dark girl, all creamy

satin and diamonds. She carried a big bouquet of red cyclamen, and in her hair was a scattering of the warm-hued wild blooms. That was Sybil's girl of the peasant dress.

Behind, came the Ambassador himself; and behind again a following of embassy notabilities. Amongst them was Cesare Rocucci.

Sybil was standing, a tall, white sheen of satin, too. She felt herself tall, conspicuous. She would sit down.

There was not a vacant chair.

For a moment her brave spirit failed: her one desire was to get away, to hide, to go home. Where had the Squire gone? Where was John? But no, she did not want John. She recoiled in spirit from John.

Suddenly her cheeks, which were pale, had flushed rosier than her roses. John, the contemned John, was making his way steadily towards her through a mass of men.

Sybil saw, but she forgot John; utterly and for ever ignored him, though he was a big and stalwart hero, for, in his wake was a greater hero for Sybil.

Cesare Rocucci had seen her from the distance, while he was paying his devoirs to his host. He had seen, too, John Mason, and had bidden him renew the acquaintance of the old La Cava days.

In a crowd, one is much alone.

There is a truism, old as the world. Wedged in amongst hundreds there were our two friends Sybil Grant and Cesare Rocucci.

They were talking fast; half in English, half in Italian.

"Shall I say something?" Cesare said after a lull.

"Have you not already said much?"

"When I saw Maddalena, with her bouquet of the cyclamen, my soul was like fire! Ah!"

"And I think I felt quite cold."

"Sibilla! carissima! Then you remembered——!"

"Signor Rocucci, you are growing inquisitive!" with a flash of pretended offence. Then with one of her quick, bright changes, Sybil's sweet lips smiled, and her hand actually clutched at Rocucci's arm. "Cesare!" she whispered; "Cesare!"

They were quite alone, you see.

And more people swelled the protecting crowd, and there were sounds of music, and—somewhere people were dancing.

Sybil never moved from that big room.

Many things happened after that night but we have no space to tell of them.

By way of rounding an unfinished story we may say that John Mason did not in consequence of certain measures Sybil let his life go piecemeal to the winds, and Margaret Grant joined forces, both together will, no doubt, make a social success.

Sybil's life is too complete to be desecrated by words. When she was married, made all her bridesmaids wear cyclamen. That is all we tell. And cyclamen in England, cost money!

PRIMROSE AND VIOLET.

By SUSAN K. PHILLIPS.

Primrose and Violet linger late
(*The wild winds sweep over Whitty Bay*)
"But what is blossom or bloom to me?"
Sighed the girl who gazed o'er the angry sea,
Over the great grey tossing waves,
From the mighty Head, with its crowded gables
For the smack where her lover had shipped
knew,
For a week and a day was overdue,
And in wrath he had sailed away.

Primrose and Violet nestle sweet
(*The wild winds rave over Whitty Bay*)
In the mossy nooks of the wooded dells,
Where softly the voice of the ocean swells.
And all for a posy he sought, she heard,
And gave to another! The jealous word,
And eyes averted, and sullen lip,
Sent her sailor away in the missing ship,
And his sweetheart weeps to-day.

Primrose and Violet, once he swore
(*The wild winds wail over Whitty Bay*)
His lass should wear when the bells rang clear
Over town, and harbour, and sands, and pier,
And down the steps of the steep cliff side
He led to his cottage his bonnie bride;
And now does he lie, her gallant tar,
Where the blast and the storm his mourners are
His shroud the flying spray?

Primrose and Violet, gleaming bright
(*The wild winds roar over Whitty Bay*)
"They may seek them to deck my grave,"
thought,
Knowing the wreck that the gale had wrought
Nay, dash the tears from the bright blue eyes
The sun breaks out in the fitful skies,
It strikes on the broad brown sails she knows,
Where true and steady the brave smack goes,
On her wild and perilous way.

Primrose and Violet blossom fair
(*The wild winds blow over Whitty Bay*)
The breaking surges are hard to stem,
But Bill's strong hand is firm on the helm.
Over the lip of the cruel scar,
Over the rollers fierce on the bar,
Through the crowded piers, all flecked with foam,
Battered and worn, she staggered home;
"Forgive," each met to say.

Primrose and Violet star the banks
(The light winds laugh over Whitby Bay)
 Gay hands have reft them of many a flower.
 The chimes clash out from the old church tower,
 The boats are dressed with the flags that fly
 Red, blue, and white 'neath the April sky;
 And the royal sunshine dazzling down,
 Touches to glory the red-roofed town—
 Fair bode for a wedding day.

A MAGIC INHERITANCE.

By L. WALKER.

Two hundred and fifty years ago the now insignificant village of Vollmarstein had several recognised claims to importance. It was celebrated far and wide for the strength and grandeur of the baronial fortress; for the ancient chapel of Saint Walpurga, which stood on the summit of the hill; and for the busy fair, or Kirmesse, held in the market-place yearly on the feast of Saint Walpurga, that is on the first of May.

The castle is in ruins now; the chapel is a mere tradition; the fair no longer attracts merchants, pedlars, pilgrims, minstrels, jugglers, dancers, and players; and the Vollmarsteiners have forgotten those good old times when the Saint, the Baron, and the first of May were the chief articles of the village creed.

The Saint was, of course, only visible at the rarest intervals to the purest eyes; her authority and influence were represented by holy priests, who lived beside the chapel and ministered there. There was especially one of these priests, Father Paul, whose name has been handed down from generation to generation, surrounded by a halo of ascetic purity and self-devotion.

The Baron, in the days of Father Paul, was almost as much of an absentee as the Saint; and while he was far off at the imperial court, he deputed Arnold Weber, of the Meierhof, to farm the baronial lands, and to sit as president in the baronial court.

Master Arnold Weber was both shrewd and self-confident; his many responsibilities sat lightly on his broad shoulders; even in the most difficult cases which came before him his decision was prompt and unwavering; and in only one trial during his long career had baffled suitor or condemned criminal impugned his infallible wisdom.

The criminal was a strolling gipsy-woman, who had come, carrying a baby-girl in her arms, with the other mountebank folk to a certain Kirmesse; the crime of which she was accused was sorcery; and the sentence was—death.

The Vollmarsteiners loved to tell the story at great length. It ran thus: The gipsy, when she had collected a great crowd about her by dancing as no woman had ever been seen to dance before, and by playing on an unknown instrument with a skill which events proved she must have derived from the Father of Evil, had volunteered to try on any confirmed sufferer a wondrous power of healing, which, she asserted, had been taught her by a wise woman in the Far East.

The crowd pushed forward one, Michael Schneider, well known as a martyr to shooting pains in his limbs.

"Stand there," said the gipsy-woman, "facing these good people, but fix your eyes on mine."

She herself turned her back to the assembly, so that only her patient saw her gestures, and the expression of her countenance. When he afterwards, as a witness at her trial, tried to describe what had occurred during the few minutes that ensued, he stated on oath that the gipsy had moved her hands slowly in front of him, that her face grew pale, and her features contracted, that her eyes dilated and flashed with unearthly light which stupefied him; that she then seemed to spread out before him, to obliterate from his mind all thought, all power, all understanding, and that he knew no more until he came to himself, and heard a general outcry that he had been bewitched, in which opinion he fully concurred; and though he was obliged to confess that the limb over which the gipsy had passed her hands troubled him less than the others, he looked upon the success of her treatment as a proof of its diabolical origin.

It was Father Paul who had first discerned the unholy nature of the proceedings. Passing through the market-place, his attention had been arrested by the sight of Martin standing rigid before a strangely-clad woman, who was slowly raising and lowering his arm. His suspicions were aroused, and soon confirmed when he had repeatedly, and with ever-increasing emphasis, but without result, called on Martin to come down from the little stage on which he stood. He had then with uplifted crucifix approached the sorceress, and commanded her to loose this poor soul from the spell which bound him. The spectators had taken their cue from the priest; the gipsy was forced to obey; but the holy man caught the sound of a mutter which greatly resembled a curse.

A week after the Kirmesse, Master Arnold Weber, at the head of the elders of the village, pronounced the condemnation of the vagabond dancer to a terrible death. Father Paul vainly offered her the rites of the Church. She clasped the little girl she had brought with her to the fatal fair closely to her heart, and refused all other comfort. Finally, Hans Marx, the Baron's paid scharfrichter,* piled up and lighted the faggots round her on the very spot where she had given such incontestable proof of her commerce with the powers of darkness.

Even as the flames rose round her, she persisted in her contumacy, and she invoked the vengeance of Heaven on her accuser, the priest, and on her judge, Arnold Weber, calling all present to witness that though the day of retribution might tarry, it would come at last. Then, changing her tone, she implored, in the name of Heaven's charity, that some one would take charge of the little innocent child she had left in the prison. Her denunciation and her appeal remained alike unnoticed, till the victim's agonised struggles were over, when Lisbeth Marx, the scharfrichter's wife, came timidly forward and promised—to the ears which could hear no longer—that she would be a mother to the orphan.

Had any other woman ventured to show so much compassion to the child of a sorceress, she would have lost caste for ever; but the family of the hangman had no caste to lose. They were, by virtue of their degrading office—which, by the way, was stringently entailed—as vile in the eyes of their fellow men as Jews, heretics, and the other outcasts of mediæval society. They could acquire no additional taint from their connexion with the little child whom Lisbeth took home and had baptized Gerlinde, after the baby she had buried a month before.

After a while, the excitement cooled down, and things in Vollmarstein recovered their equilibrium. Neither on Father Paul nor on Master Weber did the witch's malediction work any evil. The former continued his vigil of pious ministry at the mountain shrine, and the latter held on his busy way through life. There was but one flaw in the tissue of his success: his only son, Bruno, who by natural law should have trodden in the steps of his father, had insisted on being bound apprentice to a great printer far

away in learned Leipzig. Master Weber had at first refused; but his son had carried his point, and for seven years had been in distant Saxony.

Meanwhile in the scharfrichter's hut, behind the castle, the little girl Gerlinde grew up, and developed a comeliness of which any mother, natural or adoptive, might have been justly proud. She had crisp dark hair; a small oval face; bright brown eyes, which flashed now and then as no other girl's eyes in Vollmarstein knew how to flash; graceful gestures, with which she emphasized her easily-roused emotions; a carriage which ennobled her tall, elastic figure; a musical voice, which lent unwonted inflexions to the rough, Westphalian dialect. But these gifts, which should have carried all hearts by storm, were all inherited from her wicked, outlandish, vagabond mother, and rather prejudiced men's minds against her, so that the most beautiful maiden in Vollmarstein had only one possible suitor, to wit, Hans Marx, Lisbeth's eldest son, who had now succeeded his father in the opprobrious office of gaoler and scharfrichter.

Hans Marx, pariah though he was, was not an unpleasant man to look on; nor had he, despite his brutal profession, an unkindly heart. He was a little weak and irritable but Hans was, notwithstanding his faults, a good son to his mother, and had borne, with more than brotherly forbearance, the whims of his little foster sister.

He and Gerlinde were considered, in the village, as betrothed by the natural fitness of things. What other man would woo the child of the vagabond sorceress? What other maiden could the son of a disclassed line dare to woo?

The Marxes had always had difficulties in their wooing and wedding. For this generation the difficulty was solved, and Hans himself was ready enough to accept the solution; but Gerlinde was not so easily convinced of the correctness of public opinion.

Hans had reached the age of seven-and-twenty. His years fully qualified him to assume the responsibilities of married life. He had made many unsuccessful attempts to bring the matter before Gerlinde's notice; and, as time passed on, he grew more and more eager for his question to be answered—favourably of course. He thought of it continually: while he cleaned the kennels and tended the wolf-hounds; while he and Gerlinde worked in the garden; while they sat by the fire or at the open door in

* Torturer and hangman.

the evening; when he lay down, while he slept, and when he rose the idea was ever with him; and he took his opportunity one fine April morning when they were planting the potatoes.

"Ah!" said Gerlinde, looking up, "there are the swallows back again. Spring is early this year. Last year they did not come till after the Kirmesse."

"It is a good sign," replied Hans. "The weather will be warm; there will be the more merchants at the Kirmesse, and the more pilgrims at the shrine."

"I wish," said Gerlinde, irrelevantly, "that I could go on a pilgrimage."

"Why," asked Hans, "do you want to go on a pilgrimage? the holiest shrine in Westphalia is only half-an-hour's walk from our door."

"I should like to go to Cöln, or even to Antwerpen," replied the girl. "I should like to see what the world is like away beyond these hills."

"You would find nothing better than you had left here."

"Shouldn't I? How do you know? You have never been. I wonder you yourself do not wish to go."

"Why should I wish to go?"

"If," said Gerlinde, "you went away somewhere where no one knew that you and your father and grandfather had followed a calling which all men despise, would you not be happier?"

"Some one must be scharfrichter," he answered. "I am used to living as we live. I should have Heimweh, if I went away from here. I should die if I could not come back."

"Should you?" Gerlinde spoke contemptuously. "Well, I shouldn't."

"Why do you talk of such things, and in such a way?" asked Hans, reproachfully. "I do not feel ashamed to say I should die of Heimweh in a foreign land, and I tell you, moreover, that if it were possible for you to go away, the loss of you would be worse than Heimweh, and I would not live on any account."

Gerlinde shrugged her shoulders unsympathetically. With the gipsy blood throbbing discontentedly through her veins, what did she care to be told that her presence was the haven of rest to a home-loving heart?

But Hans was not going to be discouraged this time. "Gerlinde," he went on, "I know why you feel so restless as you do now. I said, just now, that I did not mind following my father's calling—that

was not quite true. I know how bitter it sometimes is to be an outcast, without any fault of one's own. You and I are outcasts. You fret about it, I think, but I love you so dearly that for years I have ceased to care what value I am to any one but to you. If you would be my wife I would try to be all to you that you cannot otherwise have. Say you love me, Gerlinde."

His voice trembled with emotion, but Gerlinde's was perfectly calm as she replied: "I love you, Hans, but not as a girl loves her lover. See, your hand trembles as it meets mine. I see your colour change; now you could not make me tremble, or my heart leap till my face betrays it."

"Ah!" he said, "you are young."

"Not very. I shall be one-and-twenty this Kirmesse; many brides are younger than I."

"Then that's all the more reason for you to listen to me."

"You mean," said Gerlinde, "that if I refuse you, I may wait long for another lover." She knew the story of her parentage, she alluded to it without visible emotion. "And you," she continued, "would have to seek far for a bride."

"Gerlinde!" cried her lover, "if I were free to choose from all the women in the world I would ask you, and you alone to make me happy."

"Perhaps you would, Hans; but still there is a doubt in my heart concerning myself."

"But," Gerlinde, if you would only think——"

"I do think, Hans, it is the thinking that shows me the difficulties." Then with a sudden relenting she added, "I will tell you what I will do. It is now ten days to the Kirmesse; you will leave me in peace till the vigil. I will go every morning to the shrine and tell the saint all that you have said, and all that I feel; perhaps she will give me a sign, and on the day before the fair I will give you my answer."

"Yes," said Hans, with a radiant face, too sure of the justice of his claims on Gerlinde to doubt of the saint's co-operation. "Let us go to the chapel every morning, and I will pray for a sign, too."

"Make your prayers, by all means, if you feel so disposed," replied Gerlinde, decisively; "but if I go to the chapel, I go alone. That much is understood."

So alone she went, puzzling and dream-

ing over her future every morning as she climbed the rocky, well-trodden path among the pines, which led to the ancient little shrine, in the grassy opening at the top of the hill.

The daily pilgrimage and her meditations occupied a great deal of her time—not that she knelt so long before Walpurga's altar, but because, as she went and returned, the thread of her reverie was so often broken by the violets, and schlüssel-blumen, and anemones, which looked up from the spring grass; by the delicious love-songs of the birds, and the fascinating dances of the insects. On the whole, it was more agreeable to linger in the forest than to hurry home; and as to making long prayers—why, if the saint could hear a request, and knew an earnest supplication from one which was merely formal, she could be in no doubt about the sincerity of her present suppliant. Nevertheless, she did seem to turn a deaf ear, and eight days slipped away, just as any other eight days of the year might do, and Gerlinde began to be afraid that the decision of her future lot in life would have to be made by her own unaided judgement.

As yet, Hans had asked no questions, but he looked eager and happy. She knew he would not wait one moment beyond the appointed time to renew his suit. And then what answer should she give him?—that she would take him, she supposed. What alternative was there?

The prospect of plighting her troth to Hans, the scharfrichter, presented itself to her from many different points of view as she went slowly up the hill on the ninth morning, the last day of her probation, the day before the Kirmesse. It absorbed all her thoughts and interest, not for a moment did her perplexed mind relax into an anticipation of the varied excitements which were in store for the Vollmarsteiners; which would begin with the arrival of the strangers that day; which would be continued in the fulfilling of all the traditional rites and ceremonies in honour of Saint Walpurga on her vigil; which would culminate with the manifold delights of the morrow, and conclude with a general feeling of slackness and weariness, when the last bargain had been concluded, the last dance danced, the last booth stripped of its gewgaws.

The sun had not been able to show his face when Gerlinde reached the chapel. A white mist, which had risen from the river in the night, shrouded the neighbour-

ing heights, and hid the village below, so that she seemed to stand alone with the saint, whose sympathy she had hitherto been unable to waken. She felt a little downhearted; she was wavering between two doubts, each equally harassing. She had heard that the omnipotence of the saints was called in question in some places by men even as holy as Father Paul. Perhaps the saint had been silent because she was powerless to help! or was it possible that the answer had come, and the sign been given, which she, an ignorant girl, had not seen or understood? And then a voice in her seemed to cry out: "Take Hans Marx for thy husband. He loves thee, and will do his best for thy happiness; while every one else—perhaps even the saint—despises thee."

That was the frame of mind in which she said her prayer that ninth morning, and then she got up to leave the chapel. She went no further than the door, however, for there a sound of approaching footsteps caught her attention, and she stopped in the porch to listen. Above her head the sky was a deep blue; somewhere the sun must be shining gaily, but just here the morning mist was master of the situation; it had gathered so close round the hill-side that even the pine-trees, which bordered the glade and the hut of the holy father, were but vaguely visible. The steps came nearer. It was not Father Paul walking in the forest; his feet were bare; and Hans, who after her prohibition would hardly have ventured to follow her, wore clumsy soles than those which were now ascending the stony path. Presently she saw emerging from the soft, white mist-curtain, a tall, broad-shouldered man, whose costume was not that of a Westphalian peasant, nor quite the same as that of the merchants and salesmen who attended the fair. If Gerlinde had known anything about the wide world beyond the narrow valley in which she lived, she would have recognised, in the neat, close-fitting garments and the small round hat, the garb of a handicraftsman of some important guild. The stranger differed as much in himself as in his clothing from the personal appearances which made up her experience. His face was smaller and less florid than the faces she was accustomed to; his hair and beard were cut and arranged with superior taste; his eye had a keener, nobler expression; his movements more ease and self-possession. If he were a pilgrim he was

younger and more influential-looking than the majority of pilgrims; if he were a merchant it was strange that he should make such an early excursion to pay his respects to Saint Walpurga. Gerlinde continued to inspect him, and to surmise as he came briskly forward to the doorway where she stood.

"Good morning to you," he said politely — then more to himself than to her he continued: "So I have reached the old place at last; I thought I knew the way, but who could find anything in such a fog?"

"Ah," replied Gerlinde, "these forest paths look all alike to strangers."

"But I am not a stranger," he rejoined. "I know the paths one from another, though it is a long time since I trod them. If you find them puzzling, I would venture to advise you to stay where you are for the present. I know, by old experience, that Saint Walpurga will not lift her veil for another half-hour."

Gerlinde looked at him with a little surprise. "There are not many," she said, "of those who come to the Kirmesse, who would undertake to find their way in these forests, or to predict how long these mountain mists will hang."

"Nor would I," replied the stranger, promptly, "if my acquaintance with Vollmarstein was so casual as you suggest. But I was born and brought up here; and though at Leipzig I have wandered in other woodlands and watched weather which has apparently different rules from that which I watched in my boyhood, I have not forgotten a certain skill I flattered myself on possessing seven years ago."

"Ah!" exclaimed Gerlinde, a sudden light breaking in upon her, "then you are the son of Master Weber of the Meierhof."

"I cannot deny the accusation," he replied, "but may I ask how you could know me?"

"Why, every one in Vollmarstein would know you by what you have just said, though you are greatly changed by your beard and by other town-cut clothes from what you wore when you went away; but I recognise you now."

"Well," replied Master Weber's son, "you have a decided advantage over me. I should have pronounced you to be as completely a stranger to Vollmarstein as you would have pronounced me. Surely I knew every face in the village when I left the place; and I could not have forgotten yours, though you could only have been a child then."

"Perhaps you never noticed me. I live with Lisbeth Marx in the scharfrichter's cottage. The people at the Meierhof would scarcely ever see me."

As Gerlinde made this humiliating admission, her colour deepened a little; but she did not lower her eyes from his. She had an intuition that from his standpoint things might have a wider and more generous horizon.

"Yes, yes," he said, "I see now; you are Gerlinde. I might have guessed it had I been as shrewd as you are. That is why you are so unlike the other girls." For a moment her eyes fell; it was disappointing to see that her intuition had been partly incorrect. "But whether," he continued kindly, "you need consider that your loss or theirs, I will not take upon me to say, lest you should think I was trying to flatter you."

She scarcely understood the words, but their tone was easy of comprehension, and she could read the look which accompanied them. It was not a look of bold admiration such as a town-bred stranger might cast upon a pretty peasant. It was a look more of pity and compassion; it had more discernment and interest in it than any scrutiny which had ever before been accorded to Lisbeth's foster-child; yet, as she felt its depth and sympathy, Gerlinde realized more truly than her untutored soul had ever yet realised that she was and must be an alien and an offence to all but those who were bound to her by a like birthright of shame and ignominy.

With a brusque good-morning, she turned quickly away, and left Master Arnold's son looking after her with an interest which changed to regret as the mist hid her from him.

So Gerlinde had prayed all her prayers, and the saint had remained obdurate to the last. But with the immediate prospect of imparting the result to Hans himself, her submission and her philosophic acquiescence in the most obvious solution of her difficulty took wings and left her rebellious and miserable.

"I will not marry Hans," she said aloud to herself. "I would rather die to-night and be buried, instead of seeing the trees come into blossom."

Then she dismissed the subject from her thoughts, and fell to thinking of all that Master Bruno Weber had said, and of his kind, keen grey eyes which had looked at her with such friendly frankness.

All the morning Gerlinde lingered in the

forest. She did not want to see Hans till she was obliged to. In the afternoon he would put on his best clothes and go into the village to see the pilgrims and merchants come in; then she would go home. But when at last she reached the castle gateway she found she had reckoned without her host. There was Hans in gala attire, apparently waiting for her.

"Why, Gerlinde!" he cried, "how late you are. Come along quick."

"What for?" asked Gerlinde, with some asperity.

"Why, surely, you remember," said Hans, "that you promised to give me your answer to-day. See, I have brought you a troth-ring. I am going to wear my father's. Uncle Josef and the cousins from Herdecke are in the house, and Father Paul has come to bless our betrothal."

"Hans!" cried Gerlinde, "you had no business to make these preparations without consulting me."

"But I did ask you, Gerlinde. Don't you remember what you said? I have been to the shrine, too. I saw the saint in a dream; and Father Paul told me——"

"I don't care what Father Paul told you, or what you saw in a dream. I will not plight my troth to you!"

"Gerlinde!"

The sound of their voices had reached the house. The expectant guests, headed by the priest, came out.

"My daughter," said the holy man, "do not delay any longer. My time is valuable. I am waiting to speak a blessing over your joined hands."

"You need not wait to speak a blessing over me, Father," returned the girl calmly. "I have just told Hans I will not place my hand in his."

"Just a woman's whim," interposed Uncle Josef. The cousins assented. Gerlinde shook her head. She felt strong enough to resist them all, as if some great force had been born in her which she could not understand.

"It is no whim," she said. "I would sooner die than marry Hans."

"Girl!" cried Father Paul, "this is foolishness. Hans is a worthy man, despite the calling he was born to follow. In this matter he is not acting without guidance; and will you reject his honest love, and dare to raise your will against the voice of the Church, as your mother did before you?"

It was not the first time Gerlinde had heard this reproach; but to-day the words fell on her ear with a fuller meaning. She

could not but resent them. She drew herself to the full height of her noble stature, and, looking round on them all, cast down her defiance without visible excitement.

"Whatever my birth may be, no man, no power on earth, shall force me to link my life to one I do not love as a wife should love her husband. Nor will I hear any more foul words spoken of my mother, who was perhaps as innocent in God's eyes as her accusers. I shake off the dust of this place from my feet. I come of a wandering race. There are lands where none know the shadow that has rested on me here."

"Silence!" thundered the priest. "This is blasphemy. The evil spirit of her mother is awakening in her."

"Gerlinde," cried Lisbeth, "hush, my child! You are beside yourself."

"Gerlinde!" echoed Hans, fiercely. "You shall not go. I will not suffer it."

"Not suffer it!" repeated Gerlinde, letting her calm, determined eyes meet the wrath of his look. "Great Heavens! that you should talk of force to me!"

She drew a long breath, and something stronger, deeper, mightier than she had ever felt before filled her being. She scarcely remembered where she was. She only existed in the overmastering desire to vanquish her would-be oppressors. She saw the angry light fade from Hans' eyes, she saw an unwonted pallor cover his face. She did not understand what had happened, but she knew she had gained some great, mysterious victory. Then she heard Father Paul's voice:

"Come, my son, time presses. We will postpone this ceremony, and you can come and assist me to clear the weeds from the steps of the chapel. This foolish girl will remember her words, and repent of them. Until then, she is better alone." He paused. Hans made no response, no movement. "Hans Marx!" he repeated, "do you hear?" with the same effect. Then a look of horrified wonder and anger filled the priest's face. "I spoke but too truly," he said, striding forward, "when I said that the spirit of her mother was awaking within her. She has bewitched Hans as the sorceress bewitched Martin Schneider twenty years ago."

There was a wild chorus of dismay and terror. Gerlinde felt rough hands laid upon her; there was much hurrying to and fro; a great crowd seemed to collect all at once. She was hustled along. Her resistance was overpowered. Some

one blindfolded her eyes, lest their deadly power should work further evil. She tried to protest; a coarse, cruel hand stopped her mouth. When at last the noise was over, she put up her hands and took off the bandage, to find herself alone in the Hexenthurm* under the castle. She was not fettered, not from goodwill on the part of those who had pushed her into the cell, but because the only hands which understood the locks and bolts of the fetters were tied and bound by her spells. She was faint, weary, and dazed; she could not rouse herself to reflect, or to surmise the consequences of her fatal inspiration. The one idea which formulated itself in her mind was, that the saint had given her a sign after all—had branded her with a stigma which cut her off from all her fellow-creatures. All that night she lay, more asleep than awake, on the straw which formed the prisoner's bed, in the corner of the damp, reeking cell.

Meanwhile, Hans had slept out his magnetic sleep, and had awaked full of awe at the remembrance of what had befallen him.

"Ah me!" he kept repeating. "It is not that I love her any longer, but my heart will never let my hands pile the faggots round the stake for Gerlinde."

"Why not?" said his mother. "Thou should'st thank Heaven that we found it out in time to save thee from being her husband."

In the village there was great excitement. Every one had always known that Gerlinde would show her mother's nature some day; otherwise, why had she those large, bright-brown eyes and those swift, ready gestures? The trial would, of course, be after the Kirmesse. No one could expect Master Weber to postpone his pleasure to his duty on the occasion of his only son's return. When the fatted calf had turned into cold veal, and when the fires of Saint Walpurga had burnt out to cold and black ashes, the trial of the witch and her subsequent punishment would be an exciting event to look forward to.

All this Bruno Weber heard as he and his father sat that evening in the "Golden Hirsch," drinking healths in Westphalian beer. The man of law had much to say on the matter; his painful duty was quite clear to him, and all the voices backed his judgement. But young Master Weber held his peace. In learned Leipzig he had

caught glimpses of several things in heaven and earth which did not form part of the philosophy of his native village. He did not speak of them, however, because he knew that no man is a prophet to his brethren; but he cogitated on some plan for the efficacious defence of that noble-faced maiden, whose eyes, so far from being full of evil, had seemed to him the purest and truest in the world. There were, he knew, great lawyers and churchmen—Christian Thomasius, in Leipzig, for instance—who condemned the trials for so-called witchcraft. Before Gerlinde was brought out of prison to answer the accusation against her, he would find means of communicating with some of these great champions of the cause of humanity, who would gladly raise their voices in her behalf.

Gerlinde, in her damp cell, had no glimmer of any such hope of delivery; yet her courage rose when morning dawned. A kindly sunbeam looked significantly at her through the grating, and she ate with relish the breakfast of black bread which was pushed by an invisible person through a square aperture in the massive door.

As the day wore on, her gleam of courage passed with the sunbeam, and she sat vacantly watching the heavy door, which she would never pass until she was led out first to condemnation, and then to execution. At last as evening drew near there were footsteps and voices on the stones outside. The key turned in the lock; some one was coming in. Her heart throbbed; if it were Hans could she not work on his pity to screen her escape? But Hans had too vivid a recollection of what had befallen him to trust himself in her dangerous presence again. When the door rolled back on its hinges it was Father Paul who entered the cell, carrying his crucifix uplifted with one hand and a phial of holy water in the other.

"My daughter," he said, with stern compassion, "your sin has been great, you have left the flock and gone astray; your punishment, I fear, is inevitable, but Holy Church does not forsake you as you have forsaken her. I come to exhort you to penitence, and humble confession, while yet there is time given you."

It was a long time before the signal was given that the priest's ministrations were over. As Hans reopened the door for his exit, he gave a hasty glance into the cell; there, half kneeling, half crouching on the straw bed, was Gerlinde. Father Paul

* Witches' dungeon.

seemed agitated; he had drawn his cowl over his face and was praying earnestly in a tremulous whisper.

No sound of the Kirmesse penetrated to the dungeon; but as the priest passed the castle gateway in the fading sunset light, the noisy merriment seemed to be at its height. Every one was in the marketplace, or hastening thither; those whom he met only saluted him hastily; his importance was lost sight of in the more urgent importance of getting plenty of amusement.

One man, however, who had been lingering near the gateway, followed him a few steps, then, failing to attract his attention, plucked his sleeve.

"Father," he said. "You promised to give me some account of your visit to the prisoner."

It was Bruno Weber who spoke. The priest did not turn his head.

"My son," he said, "I cannot speak with you now—or here." His voice was hoarse and strange, as though he had gone through great agitation. He strode on, clasping his crucifix close to his breast, and murmuring prayers with ever-increasing earnestness.

"Did you tell her, good sir," Bruno began again, keeping up with him, "that I am undertaking measures to save her?"

The priest started visibly, slackened his steps for a moment, then strode on again, without interrupting his prayer. Bruno frowned impatiently, and followed him until they had reached the glade in which the chapel stood. There the cowed figure halted, and said in the same subdued voice:

"Return, my son, I will speak with none, to-night."

"Nay, father," protested Bruno, "you gave me your promise; and I cannot leave you until I know whether or not you gave Gerlinde my message."

His companion turned towards him in silence; the last ray of the after-glow fell first on the thick folds of the cowl, and then on the face from which he slowly drew it back.

Bruno Weber gave an amazed cry, then springing forward, he seized the hands which held the crucifix.

"Gerlinde!" he cried. "It is not really you?"

"Yes," she replied, in a whisper, "it is Gerlinde—you desire her safety, do you not say? Then leave me here and keep my secret."

"I cannot leave you here, like this," he

answered, still holding her hands; "nor can I keep your secret until you have told it me. I have no faith in witchery, yet, to see you here and in this dress, makes me almost believe in something of the sort."

"It is no witchcraft," cried the girl, simply and earnestly. "Could a witch hold this crucifix to her breast as I do, and say the holy prayers I have said as I came along? Would Heaven have let a witch escape as I have escaped?"

"Nay, Gerlinde, I know you are no witch; but tell me how you escaped. It was not Hans who helped you?"

Gerlinde shook her head. "When Father Paul came to me, with the rood and the holy water," she said, "it came into my mind that a witch's power is said to forsake her in the presence of the cross; and, therefore, if I could bewitch Father Paul, as my mother bewitched old Martin, and as I bewitched Hans yesterday, I should prove that I had no dealings with Satan. So I fixed my eyes on his and raised my hands; the strength that arose in me bade him yield, and I saw his face change as Hans's face changed, and I knew I had prevailed. Then a great fear seized me; for I saw that though I was sure myself that Satan had not helped me, I was in greater peril than before. Then I thought it would be possible to take the Father's cowl and cassock, and give him my skirt and apron and cap, and leave him there while I got away. He obeyed me as a little child obeys, and I took his crucifix and gave Hans the signal to open. To-morrow they will find him in my cell; there will be a terrible outcry. You must not tell them you have seen me, till I have had time to get far away."

"Nay," said Bruno, "you cannot escape without help. You must let me help you. We will start for Leipzig to-night; there, even if they find you, they shall not lay a finger on you, if you will give me the right to protect you."

Gerlinde looked at him with wondering joy.

"Is it because you are so clever," she asked, "that you are so good to poor outcasts?"

"I am good to you, Gerlinde," he replied, drawing her closer to him, "because I want you to love me as I began to love you the moment I saw you; and from this day, all outcasts will be sacred to me, through what you have suffered."

And all that night of haste and weariness

ness they bore with them that foretaste of Paradise which is bestowed on those whose hearts are anchored in the golden depths of first love.

When Gerlinde's escape, and the means by which she had effected it, became known, the excitement in Vollmarstein passed all bounds; the long and learned explanation of the matter which Bruno Weber sent from Leipzig, a few weeks later, only aggravated the rancour of public opinion.

Father Paul, however, took a view of the strange events which partly coincided with Gerlinde's own. He declared that a spell could only work, in the presence of the holy emblem of the Passion, by some mysterious dispensation of Providence. More than once he alluded to the long-forgotten curse pronounced by Gerlinde's mother on himself and Arnold Weber. Whether it was this spiritual trouble which exhausted his mind, or whether the night in the damp cell had undermined the old man's already worn-out physique, it is certain that, from the moment of his awakening from his trance, his strength failed him, and before the summer was over he lay buried under a stone on which was carved, by his own desire, "God is a righteous Judge."

Years afterwards, when Master Arnold Weber's busy path in life had led him down to the brink of the grave, he recalled certain words which the priest on his death-bed had summoned him to hear, but to which anger and mortification at his son's conduct had closed his ears; and in obedience to those long-disregarded exhortations, he sent a gracious answer to Gerlinde's oft-repeated petition for her husband's forgiveness.

WITH THE REGIMENT.

By FREDERICK TALBOT.

It was not an unprecedented thing, but still it gave Captain Oswald Preston a little annoyance, that his young wife should have fancies of her own as to their children's names. The first of their progeny was a girl who must be called Ruby; the next was also of the feminine gender, and received the name of Beryl.

Unfortunately, in neither of the above cases did the girls, as they grew up, correspond to the promises presumed to have been made by their brilliant sponsors. Ruby, who ought from analogy

to have been splendid and Titianesque, turned out a dark and sallow little woman, bright and clever, and gifted with invaluable common-sense. Beryl, on the other hand, with her fluffy hair, her blue eyes, and complexion of milk and roses, had more of the sapphire in her composition. These girls, born in the regiment, and familiar from earliest childhood with barracks, cantonments, and country quarters, took kindly to the military profession, and eventually married soldiers.

There was a son, too; and he also took kindly to that part of the duties of a cavalry soldier which relates to pig-sticking, hunting, steeple-chasing, or rough-riding. But as for military treatises, mathematics, the languages of Greece and Rome, and those other hard matters which, like so many dragons, guard the entrance to Sandhurst or Woolwich, our young Jacynth would have none of them.

Yes; Mrs. Preston had carried out her whim as to nomenclature even in the case of her boy, and had given him a name under which he fretted not a little in after life. But as everybody had always called, and ever did call him Jack, it was very seldom that his name gave him much inconvenience.

Finally, after many years' respite from maternal cares, Mrs. Preston gave birth to a pretty little soft white nestling in the way of a baby girl, whom she at once enthusiastically named Pearl. And this time the Colonel—by force of promotion—objected nothing. A pearl was not a stone, after all; and there was something in the soft and glowing purity of this new blessing of his graver years, that harmonised, so thought the Colonel, very well with the name.

Mrs. Preston did not live to see her Pearl develop the promise of her childhood. She died in India, bequeathing her treasures—that is to say, her husband and her children—to the care of her oldest and dearest friend, one Jane Symonds, of Claverling Park.

"When I am gone, you are to marry Jane," she had often told her husband in those latter days—a course he had always indignantly repudiated. But in the end all had come to pass as his wife had planned.

After her death the mainspring of his life seemed to be gone. He gave up his command to return to England on furlough; and, when that expired, he retired from the service with the rank of Major-General.

Always when in England Clavering Park had been a second home to him. His children had spent their holidays there when their parents were abroad. And in marrying Jane Symonds there would be only a continuation and completion of his former life.

On her part, Miss Symonds had always looked upon Oswald Preston as her ideal of a man; and had perhaps at times, in her lonely state, envied her friend's happiness. And although a practical woman in every-day life, yet she had her sentimental side, and she had been touched at the trust confided to her by her friend's last wishes, "To look after Oswald and the children. He will be lost and helpless without some one to look after him."

The marriage came about in a quiet, unobtrusive way. There had previously arisen a question of settlements. Jane Symonds had come into the Clavering estate under her uncle's will, and she could dispose of it as she pleased. But she felt herself bound by a kind of moral obligation in the matter. If there were no children of the marriage, the estate should go back to the Symonds' family. The General, himself, pronounced that this was only right, and the old-fashioned country lawyers, who were the hereditary guardians of the Symonds' title-deeds, held a similar and even a stronger opinion upon the point. And a good old-fashioned settlement was prepared, by which, failing issue of the marriage, the lands would pass, at the death of General Preston and his wife, to one John Symonds and his heirs—people whom Jane Symonds had always detested. But still duty is duty.

Old John Symonds died a few days after the wedding, and thus his son, generally known as Dick Symonds, became heir presumptive. During his father's lifetime Dick had been, so to say, under a cloud—ugly stories had been whispered about him—but now he blossomed forth into something in the way of a man of fashion in the neighbouring watering-place of Overmere. Dick was a fresh-coloured, foxy-looking man, and, being a bachelor, with means of his own, and greater future expectations, he was a good deal respected in the neighbourhood.

As time went on, Mrs. Preston found the charge she had assumed, of the General and his children, a little trying. The two elder girls, indeed, were quickly married; but Jack remained on hand, and Pearl,

although a very loveable creature, had a will of her own, and was inclined to mutiny at the stricter discipline of her stepmother.

Jack, again, in his way, gave a good deal of trouble. His father had set his heart upon his getting a commission in the Army; but the youth was a difficult subject to cram for his examinations. He struggled with much difficulty through his "preliminary," but stuck altogether at the final. Then was tried the easier passage through the Militia, and Jack was presently gazetted to the third, or militia battalion of the Blankshire Fencibles, whose head-quarters were at Overmere. Jack joined with great glee for the period of training, and made, according to general repute, a very smart subaltern.

In that regiment Dick Symonds was Captain, and very kindly took up the young man a good deal, and initiated him into all the evil ways of the neighbourhood. Also, he introduced the youth into his own club, where play was high and deep. But then Dick, as everybody said, was always trying to dissuade the boy from playing high; and when his advice was disregarded, and heavy losses followed, Dick had come forward in the handsomest way to draw him out of the scrape: that is to say, he introduced him to people who lent him money, became his security for advances, and, when his promises to pay were not redeemed, took the bills up himself and saved the youth from further exposure.

Then, however, Dick put the bills in his pocket, and rode over to Clavering Park and asked to see Mrs. Preston. Long years had elapsed since he had visited Clavering Park. Years ago he had been forbidden the house in consequence of some youthful escapade; but, after all, Dick was a blood relation, and the heir to all the broad lands of the Symonds's, so that Mrs. Preston received him graciously enough. Dick was gifted with a soft, persuasive voice and impressive manner; and when he set forth how he had heard of the scrape into which Jack had got, and had saved the family credit by redeeming him from the hands of the Philistines, Mrs. Preston began to think that she had been wrong in her opinion of Cousin Dick, and that he was, after all, a manly, warm-hearted fellow. She insisted upon paying Jack's liabilities out of her own private purse, and was especially grateful to Symonds for not going to the General about the matter.

Having established a footing at Clavering Park, Dick Symonds soon became a favourite there. The General liked him well enough. Jack looked up to him as a guide, philosopher, and friend; and Pearl gave him a frank, girlish friendship, that was especially grateful to his mind. For it was for her sake that he had taken all the risk and trouble to ingratiate himself with the people at the Park. Her simple, ingenuous charm inspired him with the strongest passion he had ever experienced.

In spite of Captain Symonds' care and trouble, Jack continued to get into scrapes; and before long he gave the coup de grâce to his prospects by falling in love with the pretty daughter of a neighbouring gamekeeper, and by marrying her one fine day at the office of the registrar of the district.

Jack was now of age, and could do as he pleased; but the General refused to recognise in any way the newly married pair. He sent his son a hundred pounds, telling him that it was all he need look for in the way of inheritance. He altered his will, cutting out his son altogether from its provisions, and tried to appear as if he had dismissed the whole affair from his mind.

Jack had one secret interview with his sister Pearl, in which he told her that he was the happiest fellow in the world, and that his little Amy was worth all the sacrifices he had made for her. He was going to London, where he meant to find fame and fortune in some, as yet, undiscovered way. Pearl was broken-hearted at losing her brother, who was still more than ever a hero in her eyes for having braved the opinions of the world for love's sake. She gave him all her store—five pounds, and a crooked sixpence with a hole in it, which he promised always to wear for her sake, and so he departed, promising to write as soon as he had any good news to communicate.

Nothing more was heard from Jack himself. But, about a year after his departure, it was known in the neighbourhood that his wife had died in giving birth to her first child. Pearl wept over the poor thing's sad fate. Still the hope arose that Jack would now come back to them. And there was still time for Jack to get his commission, if he set to work at once.

Indeed, since Jack's departure, an event had occurred which would give a roseate

hue to his future prospects. Another Symonds had died, an eccentric and miserly character, who had, to everybody's surprise, left behind him a large fortune, which he had bequeathed to his niece, Jane, as "the only respectable member of the family." Mrs. Preston openly avowed her intention of bequeathing the windfall to the two persons whom, after her husband, of course, she held in most affection—that is to say, to Jack and Pearl.

Captain Symonds had been wild with rage when he heard of his kinswoman's legacy. It ought to have come to him, and would have been of infinitely more value to him than a succession that he might never live to enjoy. But he concealed his feelings successfully when at Clavering, and he volunteered in the most friendly way to go in search of Jack, and bring him back to the bosom of his family. The Captain spent some weeks in London, but returned with the report of a fruitless quest.

And now Captain Symonds began in earnest to make his court to pretty Pearl. He had certain advantages on his side. Even his years—he owned to thirty-five, and was perhaps a little older—he did not think were much against him, for a young girl is often more flattered by the preference of one of mature years than of some one she looks upon as a mere boy. And then the girl liked him well enough already, and her stepmother was not exactly hostile to his pretensions. For Captain Dick had been very much on his good behaviour lately, and rumours of former evil deeds had become faint and undefined.

And, after all, it would be pleasant to have Pearl continuing to live among them, and to think of her as the future *châtelaine*. But there was a rival in the field, one who had sprung up like a mushroom in the most unexpected fashion.

Only a few months ago the Government had put in repair some tumble-down old forts in the neighbourhood of Overmere, and had sent down a detachment of Artillery to garrison them. And the Lieutenant in command of the detachment proved to be an old fellow-pupil of Jack's, who had passed into the Artillery, and who renewed an acquaintance formerly made with the household at Clavering Park.

And between young Arthur Russel of the Artillery, and Captain Symonds of the Militia, there arose a mutual distrust and

dialike which could hardly be attributed to professional jealousy. As for Pearl, although perplexed and troubled by the evident rivalry of the two men, she began to find that her friendship for her older admirer was becoming pale and faint in comparison with the interest inspired by the new wooer. And yet, whenever there was a question between the two, she gave Captain Symonds the preference.

At last there arrived news of Jack Preston—not directly, but through enquiries made by Captain Symonds. It was pretty well established that, shortly after his wife's death, he had enlisted in the Sixtieth Dragoons, the General's old regiment, under the name of John Diamond. The regiment was now somewhere on the Nile, forming part of Lord Wolseley's force. Mrs. Preston was for sending Cousin Symonds off at once to find him out, purchase his freedom—as she expressed it—and bring him home.

But the General would not hear of this. To desert his colours in the presence of an enemy would be impossible to a son of his. No; let Jack win his spurs, and when the campaign was over, let them see what could be done for him. The General even forbade any of his family to write to poor Jack.

But from that time it was noticed that the old soldier looked braver and better than he had ever done since Jack's departure. He scanned all the reports from the army abroad with increased interest, and painfully studied the occasional lists of casualties.

In spite of her father's prohibition, Pearl determined to write to her brother. He should know that there were people at home who still loved him, and were longing to see him again. But it was not an easy matter at Clavering Park to smuggle out such a letter. The General supervised the postal arrangements with something of military rigour. A special messenger took the letter-bag every evening to the nearest post town, and before he left the General always turned out the letters, counted them, and assured himself that they were properly stamped, and a letter in Pearl's handwriting with such a remarkable address as Private John Diamond, Sixtieth Dragoons, British Expeditionary Force, and so on, would be sure to attract his attention; and to ask a servant to post a letter surreptitiously was too humiliating. But there was Captain Symonds at hand, who was in her con-

fidence as to Jack, and who was only too ready to help her in this matter.

But Captain Symonds made such a mystery of the business, that poor Pearl was soon conscious that she had placed herself in a false position. It had been such a simple affair, too, in the beginning. Pearl had been walking with Captain Symonds in the garden with some other guests, when she had slipped Jack's letter into his hands—with the hurried request, "Direct this and post it for me, please; it is for Jack." He ought to have understood the whole thing in a moment.

There was some one else, however, who thought he understood the whole thing, and was almost broken-hearted at the discovery. Arthur Russel had seen the rapid delivery of the letter, and he came to the natural conclusion that there was a surreptitious correspondence between Pearl and the handsome, unscrupulous Dick Symonds. Poor Russel went back to his dwelling by the sad sea-shore, full of grief and rage. And yet he had no right to interfere; he could not even punish that intriguing rascal, Symonds. He could only avoid the girl for the future, and, as soon as he could, exchange into some other battery far away from his faithless Pearl. By a wonderful stroke of good-fortune, as he thought, he was able to effect his purpose. An artillery relief was going out, the subaltern in charge of which was incapacitated by a dangerous accident. Russel's application coming in at the right moment was acceded to, and he was ordered out to Egypt. He had only time for one hurried call at Clavering Park. He saw Pearl but for a moment; there was sorrow and disappointment he thought in her eyes, dark and suffused. But he looked and spoke in his coldest, driest manner. It was good-bye, and for ever.

In the privacy of her own room Pearl gave herself up to uncontrollable grief. Now that he had gone, she felt that she had, unasked, given young Russel her heart, and he had left her in coldness and evident anger.

But as time went on and no news came from the young artilleryman; and, considering the kindness shown him at Clavering Park, he might have written to Mrs. Preston and kept alive his acquaintance with the family; looking to this blank silence, Pearl began to think that really she had been deceived, and that Arthur Russel was one of those typical soldier lovers who love and ride away. And Cousin Dick

was always at hand, always tender and devoted—too much devoted, indeed, for his confidential interviews, his mysterious asides, and the heartfelt way in which he threw around her his protection and devotion when they walked, or rode abroad together. And people began to say openly, "Of course she will marry Dick Symonds—everybody can see that all that is arranged." But the general sentiment, if expressed with equal candour, would have been rather of compassion than congratulation for the object of Dick Symonds' devotion.

Such was the state of affairs one fine spring morning, when General Preston suggested, at breakfast, that his daughter should accompany him for a ride over the downs to a little market town, where he had some business to transact. Mrs. Preston pronounced that the ride would do the girl good; and Pearl assented submissively rather than enthusiastically. The girl was looking a little pale and thin. But then the winter had been long and trying, and on the whole depressing. The troops were returning from the East, but nothing had been heard of Jack—and not a word had come from the young gunner.

The day was fine and open as the General and Pearl rode away over the downs and across the valley into the wild, broken, furzy country beyond. Great fleecy clouds were sailing majestically over head, sunshine and shadow chased each other over the wide landscape, while everywhere the subdued voice of spring thrilled the inner sense with a feeling of pathetic joy and expectancy.

Beyond the brow of the hill stretched a wide and broken plateau, tufted here and there with plantations, and rising to a gaunt and massive headland which even the sunshine did not brighten much, and which looked dark, and gloomy, and louring in the shade.

Across the flank of the headland zig-zagged a white thread of a road, which took a more direct course across the waste and broadened out into two wide margins of greensward with a narrow strip of Macadamite formation between. Here had once been a noted coach road, enlivened by a constant succession of post-chaises, carriages, and mail-coaches; but it now, in a general way, was as lonely and deserted as any road could be in a civilised country.

To-day, however, there was a stir of something on the road. In the distance

dark masses glided almost imperceptibly along with a faint, metallic murmur, while every now and then radiant points of brightness flashed out like lightning from a thunder cloud. Points of colour, too, were scattered here and there; and the sandy common gave out a hollow, quaking sound, as if gathered legions were tramping about in its subterranean caves. Then a trumpet rang out, and the whole array was spread out in a different fashion, becoming almost invisible in the dazzle and glitter. Here was some cavalry regiment on the march—a sight not very familiar now; but one that had often enough been seen on that old road when there was fighting going on in Spain or in France.

"It is my old regiment," said the General, as he drew up where a little stone bridge covered a lazy stream that filtered through the waste.

"It is Jack's regiment," cried Pearl, as the leading vedettes came in sight with carbines unslung, and the sun glinting bravely on brass helmets and steel accoutrements.

"Nobody knows me now," muttered the General, as officers and men rode by.

But surely if Jack were there he would recognise them, even if he escaped the scrutiny of the lookers-on. But troop after troop passed by, and there was no sign of recognition from the ranks. Again the trumpet rang out as the last files passed the bridge. It was the signal to halt and dismount. Then the General and Pearl rode on, disappointed and sad; and on the other side of the bridge they found that a couple of light transport waggons had been halted, and on the top of one of these sat a little girl in a red cloak, who looked round upon the scene about her with an air of benevolent interest.

"And whose little girl are you?" asked the General, as they rode up to the cart.

"I am Dot," replied the mite, promptly.

"Dot, of the Sixtieth Dragoons."

"And where is your mother, little one?" enquired Pearl.

"Oh, mummy went in the train," said the child, "but Dot must go with the regiment."

"You see, miss, the regiment is more than a mother to her," said a trooper, laughing. "She's all right with us, and knows our ways finely."

The General hauled out a bright sixpence and gave it to Miss Dot, who looked at it doubtfully, and then handed it over to the attendant trooper.

"That will be a drink for you, Turner," she said, condescendingly.

"Yes, Miss Dot," replied the man, chuckling with delight at the child's aplomb.

The General smiled too, but sadly, as he rode on.

Then they came upon the Colonel, who was seated on a hedgebank, discussing a packet of sandwiches.

"I can't stand this suspense any longer," muttered the General.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "for disturbing you at your luncheon, but you have recently arrived from Egypt, I fancy!"

"You are right," replied the Colonel, briskly, still munching his sandwiches; "and delighted we were to get away from that beastly dusthole. And we are marching for Overmere, which I know of old to be pleasant quarters."

"I trust you will still find them so," said the General, politely. "But may I ask if there is in your ranks a young soldier named John Diamond, in whom I take an interest?"

"There was," replied the Colonel, kindly. "One of the best and most gallant soldiers in the regiment."

"There was!" repeated the General, with a break in his voice.

"Yes; for I am sorry to say he was knocked on the head in a skirmish. He was down in the lists as James Drummond, by the way; but that did not matter, for the other was an assumed name."

"Thank you," replied the General, retaining his composure. "He was my son. A gallant soldier, I think you said. You have made me very proud, Colonel."

The General galloped off, and Pearl and the belted groom tried in vain to keep up with him. At last he drew up, and turned a white face towards his daughter.

"Your brother Jack is gone, dear," he said, "but he died like a soldier, and we won't grieve."

There was no fuss made about the matter at Clavering Park; but the General fretted a good deal in secret, and Pearl wept often over the fate of her brother. And Dick Symonds proved wonderfully sympathetic and kind, always making the most of poor Jack's good qualities, and lamenting his untimely fate. Pearl began to think that if she must marry somebody who was not the man of her choice, it would be better to fall in with family arrangements and take to Dick Symonds and Clavering Park.

Her stepmother urged her to make up her mind, for now that Jack was gone, she was anxious to settle her affairs once for all. Captain Symonds, too, urged his suit with remarkable ardour and pertinacity.

With Clavering Park in reversion, and the Symonds' money in possession through his wife, the Captain flattered himself that he would have been even with the Preston family, whom he had always regarded as "pernicious interlopers." Of course, he excepted his future wife from this judgement; but then she should become a Symonds of the original brand, or he would know the reason why.

Hitherto, Clavering Park had held itself aloof from the military at Overmere Barracks. But now that the General's old regiment was quartered there, there was every reason to be civil to it; and Mrs. Preston before long drove over to call on the officers' wives, and she took Pearl with her. When they had finished their round, they were driving past the barrack gates, when Pearl espied, issuing forth, the little girl in the red cloak whom she had seen on the transport waggon not long before. She looked so small in contrast with the big barrack gates, and yet she was so entirely dignified and self-possessed as she followed in the footsteps of a stout, motherly woman, who was hurrying along with a basket!

"Dot, Dot!" cried Pearl, stopping the carriage. "Dot, come here!"

"What does you want with Dot?" said the child with dignity, "Dot's busy."

But the motherly body turned, and, taking the child in her arms, brought her to the carriage.

"She's a dear little thing, ain't she?" said Mrs. Sergeant Brown, "and quite the life of the regiment. But she ain't my child, though I'm just as fond of her. She's an orphan like, anyhow, her mother's dead and her father," sinking her voice, "left almost for dead in the hospital."

"Come with me, Dot," cried Pearl, holding out her arms.

But Dot clung to her "mummy," and could not be persuaded to leave her.

"You must bring Miss Dot to see us," said Mrs. Preston smiling, and she gave Mrs. Sergeant Brown her card and drove away.

Not long after a mounted trooper rode up to the hall door at Clavering Park, with a despatch. It was from Mrs. Brown, informing the ladies that little Dot was

very ill with a feverish attack, and that she was continually talking about the "pretty lady," and wanting to see her; and if one of the ladies would kindly come and see the child, Mrs. Brown would be very grateful. Pearl said at once that she would go.

"But if it is something infectious?" objected Mrs. Preston.

"Then I will be disinfected before I come home," said Pearl resolutely.

There was quite a subdued air over the barracks that day. The trumpet calls were performed in dumb show. Stalwart dragoons, with pails and brushes, stepped softly across the barrack square, and the usual clatter and chatter was hushed, and the whole regiment held its breath as it were as the life of little Dot hung in the balance. Pearl was ushered quietly into the bare little barrack-room, where the child was tossing in her narrow crib, her wavy hair tumbled in disorder upon the pillow, and the brilliance of fever in her great dark eyes.

"Here's the pretty lady come to see you, dear," said Mrs. Brown, and the child seized upon Pearl's cool, white hand and pressed it to her flushed and fevered cheeks.

"Pretty lady," whispered the child, "Dot wants her daddie. Bring Dot her daddie."

"I wish I could, darling," said Pearl.

"It's the way with 'em," said Mrs. Brown, rather vexed, "when they've got one thing they want another."

But the child still repeated her cry:

"Pretty lady, bring Dot her daddie."

"I will bring him if I can, Dot," said Pearl.

But the child seemed pacified by thus much assurance, and presently fell into a troubled sleep, still holding firmly by Pearl's hand, who dared scarcely move a muscle for fear of waking her. But as little Dot tossed uneasily on her pillow, her little nightgown flew open, and there, about the little round throat, hung by a silver cord a crooked sixpence. Pearl stooped to examine the coin, and then raised her head with a smothered cry:

"This is Jack's child. It must be; there is the crooked sixpence I gave him when he went away."

For several hours slept little Dot; her rest becoming more calm and peaceful as she slept, with Pearl's hand held tightly in her little fist.

"She's taken a turn, miss," said Mrs.

Brown, joyfully, as the child awoke with a calmer light in her round, wondering eyes.

As Pearl drove home, full of the wonderful news about Jack's child, she met Cousin Dick half-way, who was riding over to see what had become of her. But in the manner in which he received Pearl's announcement of her discovery, Captain Symonds, for the first time, disclosed the cloven hoof.

"Jack's child—nonsense!" he screamed, half beside himself with rage. "Some impostor set up to rob us. Jack is dead and his brat, too!"

"You wretch!" cried Pearl, indignantly; and the Captain, losing all self control, galloped off, blaspheming horribly, and whipping and spurring his horse in his blind rage.

Pearl was astounded at the man's manner and bearing. The character he had unconsciously revealed filled her with disgust. And he had always pretended to be such a friend to Jack. His love for her was of the same quality as his friendship, no doubt. But after the first ebullition of his wrath, Captain Symonds became more calm. He saw the mistake he had made, and next morning he presented himself at Clavering Park, prepared to humble himself in the dust as far as apologies were concerned. But the doors no longer flew open for him. Mrs. Preston was "not at home," and the General and Miss Preston had left the night before for Egypt.

The scene changes to hot and dusty Cairo. But it is cool enough in the wards of the military hospital, almost deserted now, for only a few serious and tedious cases remain in the charge of a solitary surgeon. Along the silent marble corridors echo the steps of a couple of men in undress uniform; one is the hospital surgeon, and the other a young artillery officer, who had come to visit one of his men.

"I should be packing-up, too, in a day or two," said the surgeon. "My worst case was a sergeant in the ~~British~~ Dragoons, and he is well enough to move. What do you say, sergeant," he asked, approaching a bed that was placed pleasantly enough under a verandah, "what do you say to England, home, and beauty?"

The sergeant, who was sitting, half-reclining, on the bed, smiled faintly: "It's all right, if I can join the regiment, that's my home now, and there's my child, too; and she is a beauty, I can tell you."

"Why, Jack!" said the gunner, "Jack Preston."

"Arthur Russel, by Jove!" said the invalid, holding out his hand. And the two friends sat side by side on the camp-bedstead, talking over all that happened since they last met, while the surgeon went on to look after his other patients. Delighted was Jack to hear of Clavering Park, of his father, and Sister Pearl. "I have only had one little bit of a letter since I have been out here," he said, "and that was from Pearl. The gov'nor wouldn't let anybody write to me; but Pearl managed to get one away, by getting Dick Symonds to forward it."

Arthur Russel flushed to the forehead.

"Jack, do you know the date of that letter?" he cried.

Yes, Jack knew the date; in fact, here was the letter, and Arthur might read it. There were no secrets.

Arthur handled the letter tenderly, reverently. Dear little Pearl had written it. How he had wronged her. Yes, it was written on the very day on which he had first misjudged her; a little, loving letter, and at the end a scrawl to say that this would be sent through Cousin Dick, and that Jack must write to his care.

"And did you write?" asked Arthur, curiously.

"Oh, yes," said Jack; "told 'em all about my enlisting. I and Bob Carew joined the same day—he as Jack Diamond, and I as Bill Hyacinth. And, of course, I told them all about Dot—my little girl, you know."

Any further confidences were interrupted by the slight bustle attending a new arrival. "Visitors for the sahib," cried a black attendant, showing a grinning face in the doorway.

Jack rose, pale and excited, from his couch. His father stood before him, the old General pale, too, and shaking.

"My dear boy," he gasped, "my dear Jack, you are to come home."

And then Jack wept like a child upon his father's shoulder.

"And Jack," whispered Pearl, who had hold of his disengaged hand, "we have got Dot; and I have promised to bring home her daddie."

And so it happened that the whole party joined the next P. and O. steamer at Alexandria, and were presently steaming across the Mediterranean; Jack recovering health and strength in the soft sea breezes, and Arthur Russel and Pearl exchanging confidences in snug recesses of the poop. Some unfeeling prigs, indeed,

objected to the presence of the sergeant's stripes in the saloon of the steamer. But to such objectors the General had a ready answer in his pocket, where he always carried a copy of a recent "London Gazette."

"Sixtieth Royal Dragoons, Sergeant Jacynth Preston to be Lieutenant, vice Perkins who retires; promoted for gallantry in the field."

As for Cousin Dick, finding that his plans had all failed, and in desperate straits—for he had squandered all his own fortune and could not raise a farthing on the possible reversion of Clavering Park—he first took to a heavy fit of drinking, and under the influence of that, and what we may hope was his remorse for having suppressed Jack's letters, he shot himself one morning, just after he had heard of the return of the travellers to Clavering Park. As he was the last of the family, Mrs. Preston's marriage settlement was now void, and she could bestow the estate where she pleased.

As for Dot, she recovered speedily her health and spirits, and was ready to greet her daddie with great delight on his return. The young lady now lives part of the year with grandpapa at Clavering, and is often with Aunt Pearl, who has joined the Artillery, and who, in accordance with the motto of that corps, is here, there, and everywhere. But the great delight of Miss Dot is still to be "with the Regiment."

TWO AND ONE.

By B. DEMPSTER.

Author of "A Man's Friends," "For Sweet Charity," "Through Gates of Gold," etc. etc.

CHAPTER I.

FAR off, on the mysterious, inaccessible summits of the mountains, deep down in cavernous gorges, on the bare, bleak sides of granite precipices, the awful silences of fallen snow and ice-bound waters were broken. Great avalanches, awaking dull, thundering echoes, crashed down from mighty heights into chasms where the feet of men had never trod. There was the plunge and the roar of waters as the mountain-torrents, swollen by the melting snows, tumbled foaming into rivers so green and lucid that the stones of their bed could be seen from the bank. It was early yet in the year; but spring had come. In England there were daffodils and primroses in hedge-lined

lanes and fields; here, there was only the pale, tender glint of new green, as spruce and pine clad themselves in their fresh spring robes, and the wonderful tints of the mosses. The air was sharp and cold; but sweet and invigorating. There is no atmosphere in Europe to surpass the air of Norway. Still, it was very cold. The sky was grey overhead, as if threatening more snow. A stolkjaerre was driving, at rather an unusual speed for Norwegian ponies, along the road that skirted the precipitous side of the Romsdalen. Two human beings, muffled up in furs, occupied the stolkjaerre. One was tall, powerfully built, with the strength and decision of a giant in appearance; and in manner, the meekness and deference of a thoroughly crushed school-boy. This was the "he." The other was slender, delicate-faced, with the most perfectly feminine grace of manner and appearance, lovely-eyed, and sweet-mouthed; but with the imperious will of a queen, and the bewildering spirit of a woman. This "she" was silent now; but she had been very cross, very unreasonable, very incomprehensible. She had been angry with him for having brought her; and yet it had been only at her imperious insistence that he had consented to drive her from Naes, where she had been spending the winter on the Romsdalen Fjord, to Stueflaaten, after which, with a sudden caprice, she had longed.

He himself had arrived at Naes—a perfect stranger to her—three weeks before. He was a Norwegian, she an Englishwoman. He was young, and she was younger. She was beginning to feel unutterably dull and depressed. Now that the long monotony and dreariness of winter were over, she had begun to wonder how it was she had not gone mad before the spring came.

The people of the station had been very good to her all the winter. But they had not been companions in the true sense of the word.

She had felt that it was so when this young man, with his chivalrous devotion, his keen, cultivated intellect, his generous enthusiasms, his strength, his impatience of all that was petty, and morbid, and base, came suddenly into the monotonous, still life she was living. They had, in those few weeks, become very good friends. Though, if their intercourse had been measured by mere hours or days, it would not have counted for much, for he spent most of his time out-of-doors.

But they met, naturally, as they were living in the same house, every day, either for meals or for some short period. They had taken one or two walks together; and it was in answer to a sudden outburst of hers that he had suggested that she should leave Naes for a little and go on to Stueflaaten.

They had had a long day's journey, leaving the fjord early that morning. It was now nearly five in the afternoon, and he was afraid she was worn out. From Ormeim, the last station at which they had stopped to change horses, he had driven hard and fast. The valley along which they had come was magnificent in its rugged grandeur. In the distance were the everlasting peaks, shrouded in snow. Below them, the Rauma rushed and roared along its stony bed.

"I am afraid you are very cold and tired," he said, after a long silence.

He spoke English with scarcely any accent.

"I am very tired and very cold." Her voice was sweet as music; but there was a decidedly peevish note in it at this moment. "And don't speak to me. When you do, I have to look up and see the mountains with their awful stillness and white-shrouded faces. I had grown used to them at Naes. Now this is all strange again, and—why did you let me come?"

He did not understand her in the least. She bewildered him; but he was a wise man, and attempted no answer.

"Br-r-r," he cried to his pony; and he had the satisfaction of understanding and being understood here at any rate, for the brave little pony dashed on in obedience to his encouraging cry, as if as anxious to reach Stueflaaten as he himself was.

Their destination came in sight at last. She had been cowering down closer in her furs, and had uttered no word since she last spoke. She did not answer now when he told her that they had arrived. He drove up to the station, and, jumping down, helped her to dismount. An exclamation of alarm broke from him, and, lifting her in his strong arms, he carried her into the house. The mistress of the station came to meet the new arrivals.

"The lady has fainted," he said.

They took her into the nearest room, the young Norwegian still carrying her.

The beautiful, delicate face rested on his breast. He looked down at its deathly whiteness, and his own paled. But, as he laid her on the couch, a faint tremor stirred her. She opened her eyes, and, looking

up, saw him bending over her. For a second she gazed up at him, then the colour rushed back into her face, and she sat swiftly upright.

"Please go away, and leave me alone," she said irritably, but with a shadow of some deeper feeling in her eyes. "Has not my maid arrived yet?" The maid was following with the luggage. "Go and look if you see her coming."

Olaf Ericsson did not return to the room till supper was laid.

When he entered the room, he found her resting on the couch. There was something so exhausted in her attitude, that he went up to her anxiously. But she sat up, and met his disturbed look with a frank, merry laugh.

CHAPTER II.

"How you must have hated me for making such a fuss!" she said. "But it was not the cold and fatigue that hurt me, it was the awful silence and strength of those snow-capped mountains. All life seemed paralysed by them. I could not breathe. I felt in the grasp of a cruel, pitiless power, that was slowly crushing out all my will and individuality. It was the culmination of what I have been feeling all the winter. Those Troid tinderne were slowly sending me mad. And, this afternoon, if you had not been with me, I could not have endured it. But you seemed so strong, too, and you were so good to me."

A great light, like a flame of fire, leaped into his eyes. But she was so moved by the passion which had suddenly swept over her, her eyes were so intent upon some far-off point of view, that she saw nothing so near as the young man by her side. A sudden thought flashed through his brain, that she was gazing back at a past in her life, with which he had nothing to do. She was but a stranger who had crossed his path. He knew absolutely nothing of her life, save those three short weeks just passed.

The fire died from his eyes.

"Let's leave the mountains alone and have supper," he said, in a matter-of-fact tone. "They don't trouble about us."

The note brought her back to the present, with a sudden shame for her self-betrayal. She laughed, though the sound was a little unsteady.

"That's just it. They don't care, and it's that that makes our madness. You

see, if one could only stir them ever so little——"

She stopped. A door behind them opened, and a man came into the room. She looked round at him for a second, her face suddenly growing as passionless and cold as if she, like those mountains, would never be moved again. Then she turned away, and sat down at the table.

The new-comer walked painfully with the aid of sticks. His face was pale and contracted, as if he had gone through some probation of sharp pain. He was a thin, slightly-built man, about the medium height. At the first glance, there was nothing remarkable about him. The second glance made one look again. After that, no one could forget his face—pale, refined, highly intellectual, with strength and indomitable will in every line.

He bowed slightly to the other two, and came, walking slowly and with great difficulty, towards the table. He sat down at the farthest end. Olaf took his place near Mrs. Aylmer. Stewed reindeer, cheese, pancakes, a great jug of cream, formed the meal. The cooking was capital. The best, Mrs. Aylmer said, she had found since landing in Norway. She was decidedly frivolous over her supper. Olaf Ericsson had never yet seen her so light-hearted. He roused himself from a vague depression that had come over him, and fell into her mood.

They had the conversation all to themselves. The other guest at the table sat still and stern, taking no notice of either of them.

Only once he looked up and glanced in a strange, keen way, from the young Norwegian to the beautiful Englishwoman.

"I have never tasted pancakes anywhere like Norwegian pancakes!" said Mrs. Aylmer, laughing. "I begin to think, now, that they were the saving of my reason till you came into my existence, Mr. Ericsson. For three days—when the wind raged, like a hundred giants let loose in the valley, and the snow fell, till we were almost buried—I ate nothing but pancakes. I wasn't frightened. Under other circumstances I should have enjoyed the gale. But, somehow or another, I seemed to give way, mentally and physically, and they had to feed me on pancakes. They said I wouldn't touch anything else. No doubt a light and frivolous diet satisfied the natural bent of my mind."

"What were your friends thinking of, to allow you to come and shut yourself up

a whole winter in a lonely station in the Romsdalen? It was not right."

"My friends had nothing to do with it. I wished to come—and I came. I am free to come and go as I wish."

Once more that vague chill touched him, but it vanished as she laughed softly and kindly again.

"But you only just came in time, Mr. Ericsson. Even pancakes were failing to satisfy me. I did not know what I wanted. Then you arrived, and I found out that I had stayed long enough at Naes, and wanted to move on."

It was at this point, that the man at the other end of the table glanced up. Olaf did not see the glance as he was looking into the lovely, smiling face near him. Mrs. Aylmer did not apparently notice it either, as she continued laughing and talking. But her colour had deepened, and when she arose a few moments later, to leave the table, her cheeks, usually rather too pale, were burning with a beautiful crimson blush, and her eyes almost dazzled the young Norseman with their starry brilliance.

She left the room, and the two men were alone together.

An hour later Ericsson joined her in another room, at the opposite side of the entrance-hall. It was a large, empty apartment, with two doors—one, in the corner, opening into the kitchen. The voices and laughter of the household, at supper there, could be heard. The sounds broke, with a sense of cheerful, simple-hearted life, on the silence and emptiness of this other room.

It was only lighted by the wood fire burning in the great, old-fashioned, Norwegian fire-place. It was built in the corner of the room opposite to the kitchen. The pine logs blazed on a raised stone hearth, standing out into the room. Above it, was the wide, deep chimney. The fitful, leaping flames cast strange shadows on the great rafters overhead, and the bare wooden walls, and shone red on to the motionless figure seated a few feet from the raised stone of the hearth. All the rest of the great, empty room, except just round the corner fire-place, lay in deep shadow. The slender figure in the red, flickering light sat very still.

He stood in the doorway, looking across the room at her. He watched her for a moment or two; then something in the rigid stillness of her attitude filled him with a vague fear—a presentiment of coming

ill. He hurried across the room to her side. She heard him coming, and started up, turning to face him, her eyes full of terror and anger. But it almost seemed as if she had expected some one else, for, as she discovered who it was, the angry repulsion and shrinking vanished. But he had startled her, so that she was trembling from head to foot.

"I could not bear the dining-room, with its stove," she said, trying to speak lightly. "The heat and closeness stifled me. So I came in here."

"They might have given you a light," he said, with a resolute effort stilling the passionate throbbing of his nerves. "You looked like the spirit of some incantation scene, sitting here so still and silent in the red light."

"Suppose we have a light now," she said in her brightest and frankest voice.

He coloured; he knew that she had heard the passionate note that had broken through his attempted matter-of-fact tone.

"All right; I'll tell them," he said, quietly. But he did not seem in a hurry to go. He was thinking how lovely a pretty woman could look in the firelight. Full of this conviction he said the first thing that came into his head. "I can't say much for the manners of our fellow-visitor here, though he is a countryman of your own, Mrs. Aylmer. He's the surliest fellow in the world. I tried to be civil after you left the table; but was never so snubbed in my life. His name is Holland. He came here three weeks ago, and met with a bad accident out shooting. At first they thought it was touch-and-go with his life. But he has pulled through. Not that he seems good for much now. He looks awfully ill, and can scarcely drag himself about. Yet he told me, just as he was going back to his room, that he means to leave here to-morrow. It is the only remark he volunteered to me, and that seemed a kind of after-thought; and I can't for the life of me think why he said it. It's nothing to me if he goes to-morrow or to-night. He's not much acquisition any way."

"Why did you think the remark was an after-thought?"

She had turned to face him, and her back being to the fire, her eyes were in shadow.

"I don't know—except that he had scarcely answered a thing I said. He got up abruptly from the table while I was saying something," he coloured slightly, "about you having been brave enough to

spend a winter alone in Norway. He's a brute!" Savagely recalling something he had seen in the Englishman's face as he spoke of Mrs. Aylmer.

"What made him tell you, then, that he was leaving?"

"Heaven knows! He stopped suddenly just as he was going into his room, and turned round to tell me so. Why, Mrs. Aylmer! What is the matter?"

The blood-red colour had rushed over her face. She put up her hand in a dull, confused kind of way to her head, and swayed unsteadily on her feet. He flung out his arms; but, before he could touch her, she had caught the back of the chair, and, straightening herself, broke into a little constrained laugh.

"The winter has tried me more even than I knew," she said. "It was foolish to come. But I felt that I must get away." She stopped and looked down into the fire again. He watched her face with a searching that was painful in its intentness. Not the breath of a doubt had ever sullied his trust in her; but he had often wondered what had brought her—young, beautiful, alone—to spend the winter in the Norwegian mountains. That there was some mystery, he had suspected. Now he was suddenly sure. And something in the pale, delicate face, the proud mouth, told him that it was a tragedy. He never knew what prompted the impulse. Unless it were the fire that had been kindling in his heart, which suddenly broke through all restraint.

"You came because you were unhappy," he said, in a voice of forced quiet. "And you were unhappy all the time. It was not the white cold and the ice that harmed you! The stillness and strength of the mountains would not have oppressed you. But your life was sorry, and everything hurt you. Even the very loneliness and silence! The very first moment I saw you, I knew you were sad. Even when you laughed I could hear the same note, and to-day you are sadder than ever!"

She looked up at him, startled out of all self-control. She put out her hand as if to stop him. But he went on; the quiet breaking into impetuous passion.

"There have been moments when the terrible pathos of your eyes has been almost more than I could endure. I have longed to ask you to let me do something to help you. It was presumption—madness. But I could not help it. To-night, and all this day—I can't define it—but it

has seemed as if you needed help more than ever. Perhaps it might only mean some one to whom you could say a word—with whom you could exchange a thought. Cannot you trust me? Cannot you feel that I would hold it the grandest honour to be able to serve you in any way? You know nothing of me—but, believe me, I would be to you the truest friend a woman could have. Try me."

"I do trust you," she said, "but I may not accept your friendship—nor that of any man. I have put myself in the position I am in by my own deliberate choice, and I will and must take its consequences. One is that I must live apart from friendship and sympathy such as you offer. Perhaps, if you knew all, you would not offer it. But I will prove my faith in you by this; I will tell you that I am unhappy. My life seems to have been set ajar. Perhaps I have sinned. Do not men say that everything that goes wrong is a woman's fault? But whether I have done wrong or right, I would do as I have done all over again—even though it must cost me the friendship of such men as you! I am unhappy now; but I was a hundredfold more miserable before."

There was a moment's silence. He was very pale. He understood perfectly what she had intended to convey to him. The friendship he had offered to her, was but a disguise for the great, overmastering tumult of feelings which were surging through him. What was their name? He had not known till she had taught him. She had wished to save him from an infinite self-degradation. He had known from the first, that she was not a free woman. How could he have blundered into this awful mistake? Another moment, and the false veil of friendship would have been rent, and the pent-up feelings would have broken into a torrent of passionate words—the deadliest insult he could have done her.

He stood white and dazed for a moment, trembling at the thought of what he might have done.

Then she could bear the look in his eyes no longer, and a low and bitter cry broke from her.

"Oh!" and she stretched out her hands as if in mute appeal for his pardon, "I can see, to-night, that I have made a mistake with my life. It would not matter if our mistakes stopped with ourselves; but they don't. They go out to others and hurt them. I have been proud, and hard, and bitter, and thought of no one but myself—

and my husband. You remember, I told you when I first met you that I had a husband."

It was the only direct allusion she made to the scene that had just passed between them, the under-note of which they had both so well understood.

But the burning blush died quickly away, and she went on again :

"I left my husband last year. My life had become intolerable to me. If I could have thought for an instant that it was hard for him, I would have stayed. But he did not care. It was nothing to him how I suffered. He was hard, cold, merciless. He believed that women were to be but the reflection of men. He lived his life, and thought it sufficient for me to live in his house, sit at his table, be fed and clothed by his hand. I was to have no will of my own, no mind of my own. If I reproached him, he did not understand. He was so strong, so cold, so self-contained, that he could feel no need in his life that I could fill. Besides, he believed that women had their place, and should keep to it, and that place was only the outside court to the men's holy of holies! Men could come, if they chose, into that outer court, but no woman's foot must press the sacred precincts of their inner life! And yet he loved me once."

Her eyes took a lonely, dreamy expression, and she stopped a moment, and looked down into the fire. She seemed to have forgotten the young Norwegian. He saw it, and passed his hand slowly across his big, fair moustache.

"If he had not loved me, I should never have married him. I should have known by my own heart that he did not love me. But he did; and I loved him, and gave him my life—oh, how willingly, and it came to this. Day by day we drifted farther apart. If I had not loved him, it would have made no difference; but, because of love, I could not bear it, and I left his home. I told him that from henceforth our lives should run as apart as if we had never known each other; that if I met him I would neither speak to him, nor even show by look or sign that I had ever known him. I gave up even his name! And," she added, breaking into soft crying, "my husband is here! And I know now why the winter has been so long and cold; why the stillness and whiteness of the snow have almost killed me—because love is not dead, but has been lying starving in my heart, and the pain of it has been more than I could bear."

Neither noticed how, among the dark shadows at the farther end of the room, one drew back, through the half-open door, into the hall outside.

The voices and laughter from the kitchen, at the other side, grew merrier. It struck Olaf as being strange that any one could laugh and jest. Then he turned to her.

"Good-bye—Mrs. Aylmer," he said, gently, hesitating slightly before the name, "and may Heaven bless you, and give love back again into your life."

Then he, too, turned from the firelight into the shadows, and passed from the room.

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning Mrs. Aylmer's maid told her mistress that Mr. Ericsson had gone. He had left the station at day-break. Mrs. Aylmer had her breakfast in her room. When she came down she was ready dressed for a walk, and she went straight out of the house. It was a glorious morning; the sun bright and warm. The air was full of the sights and sounds of spring. She took a road that led her across the valley to the hills beyond. A broad road went winding upward between birch and pine. Every blade of grass, every tuft of vivid-coloured moss, every glint of pale, tender green was instinct with new-born life. Only love was dead! She thought of Olaf, and was full of pity and remorse. But she thought, too, of her husband; and when she thought of him, Olaf was forgotten. He had been dangerously ill; had been close to death, they said. And she had left him to be nursed by strangers—she, his wife. But he had not loved her. Others could do for him what should have been her dearest privilege. He was as well satisfied.

With hard and bitter rebellion in her heart, she walked on till she came to the wooden bridge that spanned a mountain torrent which tumbled, a little lower, into a broad stretch of water fringed with pine.

She stood on the bridge, looking into the seething, foaming, eddying waters below. She was roused by hearing a step. She turned sharply, and saw her husband. His face was very pale, and there was something in it she had never seen before. She could not move nor speak.

"Come back to me, May," he said, un-

steadily, "I cannot live without you. I have been blind—mad! I did not understand. But this year, without you, has taught me what love is. Forgive me, and come back to teach me what life should be. Last night I was full of bitterness. I meant to go away this morning." A dull flush reflected the blush that flamed into her face. "Believe me, I did not doubt you," he exclaimed, hoarsely. "Last night I knew, as I know to-day, as I knew the first hour I ever met you, that you were the truest woman on earth. But I was mad. Life had become intolerable without you. And then meeting you so suddenly, so unexpectedly, and seeing you so proud and indifferent to me, so gentle to him, I lost my reason. I sent that message through him, though I really never—"

She flung out her hand, as if even the explanation would have humbled them past recall. He coloured red again, but his eyes looked straight into hers.

"I have something else to say. Last night, after I was able to think, I left my room to look for you. I wanted to tell you myself, before he could give the message, that I should go away to-day—that you need not fear that I should pain you a moment longer than I could help, with my presence in the house. I meant to ask you to forgive me before we parted once more, and then I should have gone away and never tried to see you again. But—when I came to the room I found you talking to him. I heard what you said. May! May! Cannot this springtime be a new beginning for us too? I love you! My life is a poor, maimed thing without you. Come back to me and complete it, and never more shall you have to doubt. My love has never failed you; it was only my mad folly—"

"It was all my mistake, Paul!" she said, the tears raining down her face. "Can you forgive me?"

The waterfall thundered on, down the rocky gorge. The scent of rising sap and aromatic resin perfumed the air. All round, above, below, was the stir of new-kindling life. When these two, standing hand-in-hand in the midst of it all, should long have passed on to the end, and have been forgotten, these things would continue, as if their little human life story had never come near them this bright spring morning. But what did that matter to them? Love was eternal, and its glory was shining even now into their newly sanctified lives.

AN ANGEL IN RED.

By H. F. ABELL.

CHAPTER I.

FROM a human point of view there were very few attributes of the ideal Arcadian season in the April of 1815. Nature had worked loyally up to old tradition, and even the ugly part of East Anglia, where our story opens, looked attractive under her care, for the birds were arriving fast from their winter quarters, the voice of the cuckoo was frequent, lilacs were budding, orchards were beginning to bloom, and gardens were gay with primroses, violets, hyacinths, and lilies-of-the-valley.

But man refused to obey the summons to rejoice, to be at peace, and to be glad. Every village inn was a political club; Squire and yeoman, farmer and tradesman, ploughboy and 'prentice lad had but one topic of conversation—the last movement of the "Corsican Ogre," and the chance of Britain being dragged into another war. Fair lips were fluent with words and phrases which were usually associated with mess-rooms and barrack-yards; the parson's lady and the village granddame found more stirring food for talk than the linen-press and the jam cupboard; and the very urchins in the street played at French and English.

Cuton village, a couple of miles from Elmford market-town, caught the infection, mildly, perhaps, from a comparative point of view, but badly enough to render it as unlike the quiet, sleepy little hamlet of ordinary times as could be.

The girls hated it all, and with reason; for if their sweethearts did not desert them for the recruiting sergeant, their time was fully occupied with talking, and arguing, and drinking toasts. And none hated it all more than did Mehitable Buttrick, daughter of the head-keeper at Cuton Hall, and betrothed to young Abner Harrington.

Mehitable was not a beauty. She was a strong, sturdy girl of twenty, with a round, good-humoured face, much freckled by wind and sun; a pair of red arms; and a foot, beneath which daisies and buttercups crouched never to rise again. But she was a kind and tender-hearted lass, and out of that great, ruddy-lipped mouth came the softest and sweetest of voices, which had never uttered a harsh or hasty word.

During this latter part of the month of

April, Abner Harrington had treated her as the other youths treated their lasses. He rarely saw her, was always in a hurry, and, worst of all, he was a great deal too often flushed of face and thick of speech.

Mehitable took it sadly to heart, and moped and sighed about in a manner very unusual with one whose very name was synonymous, in the local mouth, with untiring energy and ceaseless activity.

One morning she met Abner—a good-looking, strapping young saddler of three-and-twenty. He was in the neighbourhood of the "Red Lion," and although he was far from being absolutely drunk, he had evidently taken more than young fellows usually do before eleven o'clock in the morning.

He stopped her.

"Heard the news, 'Hitable?' he said at once, without any greeting, "the King of France has fled to Lille. Boney is in Paris, and in the Royal Palace, and the grand folk in Vienna have pronounced Boney an outlaw; and the Duke of Wellington has been in council at the War Office, and there's going to be a rare to-do."

"Oh, Abner, Abner, how I wish you cared nothing about all this," said the girl; "I take it wonderful sadly, I do. What do it matter to you what Boney and all them others are about? You ain't a soldier, and you ain't a boy. You're a saddler, and you're betrothed to me."

"Nonsense, 'Hitable," said the young fellow, with a laugh. "If an Englishman doesn't take an interest in these matters, which are occupying the attention of the senates of the world, he is not worthy the name of Englishman."

Mehitable stared at the fluent production of such phrases by one who spoke usually the plainest East Anglian Doric; but she knew that clap-trap orators abounded at the bars of village inns, and that many a young fellow owed his first step to ruin to the seduction of their vapid sophisms.

"And, Abner, it makes you associate with men you know nothing of, and it leads you to drink——"

Here poor Mehitable was lacking in womanly tact—or rather, be it said, in the knowledge of men—or she would have guessed that the very worst way to gain her end was to hint to a man who was getting drunk that he was drunk.

"You mean to say I'm drunk!" exclaimed Abner. "Then I'm not fit to be talking to you; much less to be your

sweetheart. Mind your own business, and I'll mind mine."

And he swaggered off, leaving the girl looking after him with eyes which betrayed by their tears the terrible blow dealt at her heart.

A week passed. During this time war had been declared against France, and the Duke of Wellington was assembling a British army to lead into Belgium. The first battalion of the East Anglian Regiment had passed through Cuton village, and was now at Elmford, on its way to the coast, recruiting. Cuton was like a deserted village; the shops were shut—for the apprentices would not work—the farmyards were silent, the fields were abandoned to the crows. All the young fellows were at Elmford, gaping at the red-coats, listening to the martial music; and, worst of all, every evening fewer lads returned to their homes in Cuton village.

Still, Abner Harrington came home, and Mehitable was easy in her mind. He was a high-spirited, impulsive, and easily-led-away young fellow; but he was betrothed to her, and Mehitable valued him too highly to believe that there was anything serious in the cruel words he had spoken to her.

On the twentieth of May the battalion was to march from Elmford. Its numbers were by no means complete, and the recruiting officers were employing every means to get young fellows to join the colours.

On the night of the nineteenth Elmford presented an appearance it had probably never presented before during the long centuries of its uneventful existence. Usually by nine o'clock the streets were empty, dark, and silent; but on this night Elmford, to borrow the expression used by old Paddle, who drove the last up-coach, "was a-most like Lunnun itself." Soldiers were everywhere: rolling about the streets to the strains of popular choruses, gathered about the doors of the three principal inns, crowding the tap-rooms of the ale-houses, laughing, shouting, singing, and cheering. The shops were open, the private houses illuminated, and to the mass of townspeople who were abroad, were added swarms of visitors from all the villages around.

All that day Mehitable Buttrick had been miserable. She had not even seen Abner for two days. She walked into Elmford, her heart full of dread; but to look for one young man in that swarming hive of excited humanity was to look

for the proverbial needle in a bottle of hay. She returned, unable to settle to any work; putting her hand to a job and laying it down the next minute; continually in and out of the cottage, and alert to the sound of every footstep. Her father and mother endeavoured to reassure her, but she refused to be comforted, and long after they had gone to bed, sat at the window which commanded a view of the moonlit village street, so that Abner, who had to pass the cottage on his way home, might not escape her notice.

At midnight, by which hour the pickets had managed to clear the streets of Elmford with fair success, a young fellow, in a bright, new uniform, was seated on the respectable steps of one of the most respectable private residences. He was very drunk; his shako was lying on the pavement, and his head was bent over his doubled-up knees.

To him came the picket. They aroused him after the usual gentle fashion of pickets, and tried to extract from him the street and house where he was billeted. He could tell them nothing.

"Where shall we shove him, sergeant?" asked one of the men.

"Anywhere—there into that out-house," was the reply.

"Look here, young chap," roared the sergeant in the ear of the young man, who had been partially brought to his senses by the tumble on to the straw, "the revelley goes at four to-morrow morning. There's your musket and your traps. You've got four hours to sleep off your drunk, and mind, if you don't answer your name at roll-call, you'll be put in the gaol as a deserter. If you don't believe, read that there notice."

And he directed Abner's glazed eyes to a bill affixed to the wall, headed G.R. on either side of a big crown, and threatening dire penalties to all who, having taken G.R.'s shillings, should get away without giving G.R. an equivalent for them.

Then his coat, trousers, and boots were taken off, and he was left. At four o'clock the next morning Elmford was roused from its brief slumbers by the rattle of a dozen drums in the market-place. At five o'clock the roll was called. At six the men were dismissed to breakfast, and at seven, under a clear blue sky and a smiling sun, the battalion marched out of the town, colours flying, band playing, to the accompaniment of cheers, and God-speeds, and cries, and

sobblings from the vast crowd which marched along with it until it was well on the London road.

At ten o'clock Abner Harrington awoke. He sat up and looked around him with the air of a man just returned from a long visit in a far country, pressed his hands to his aching head, and tried to collect his wits.

"Why, hang it! There's something wrong. I'll swear I was a soldier yesterday. I had a red coat, and a tall leather hat, and a gun, and a knapsack, and—why, what can have happened?"

He stood up and looked round the shed. He must either have been dreaming, he thought, or very drunk, for in the place of his military outfit there were his own clothes.

There was a pump outside. He gave himself a good sluicing and felt a trifle better, although his head seemed as if it did not belong to him. Then he dressed himself and went out. The first thing which attracted his notice was G.R.'s proclamation. He read it through more than once, and at the end came to the conclusion that nothing but keeping himself studiously out of sight could prevent him from being arrested and punished as a deserter.

He peeped into the market-place. All was quiet and sunny; and but for the presence of the workhouse men sweeping away the refuse of the last week's excitement, it would have been hard to realise that this scene of Boeotian calm and stillness had ever been otherwise.

"Well," he said to himself, "as I'm a deserter I'd best not be seen. Poor 'Hitable! How glad she will be to see me! and how I will repay her for having behaved myself like a brute!"

He slunk out of Elmford by back-streets and by-lanes, until he reached the main road a mile out of the town. Half an hour's further walking brought him into Cuton. Some young fellows were talking in a group outside the "Red Lion," and, before he could get out of the way, had observed him.

"Why, Abner, man!" said one, "we thought as how you'd gone and 'listed. Leastways, Jack Wright says he saw you in the King's livery a-marchin' along like the Dook hisself."

"Yes, and poor Mahitable Buttrick went well-nigh distracted," said a second. "She's been asking about you, and crying, and going on ter'ble to see. Come in, man, and have a mug."

But Abner had ale enough in his head

already to last him for some time, and, with an excuse, he proceeded on to the Buttricks' cottage.

Mrs. Buttrick met him at the door. She possessed *Mehitable's* physique without the girl's tenderness of character, and her face warned the penitent that a storm was in readiness for him.

"Shame on you, Abner Harrington!" said Mrs. Buttrick, "shame on you for a murderer!"

"A murderer!" exclaimed Abner.

"Yes, a cowardly murderer!" repeated Mrs. Buttrick. "You've driven away our *Hitable*, with them harum-scarum tricks of yours. When she heard you'd 'listed she went away, and nobody hasn't set eyes on her since; and Heaven above only sees where she is."

Abner stood shame-stricken, and heard in silence the torrent of abuse showered on him by Mrs. Buttrick, until, the poor woman sank down on the seat in the porch and sobbed bitterly. He did not attempt to console her, for, in truth, his thoughts were with *Mehitable*; and, if ever man stood self-convicted of unmanly, dishonourable conduct, it was Abner Harrington.

He walked away rapidly. All that morning, all that afternoon, he sought *Mehitable*. The penalties for desertion had no fears for him now, and he walked boldly into Elmford. Every one in Elmford knew *Mehitable Buttrick*. No one had seen her since the previous morning, when she had come in and enquired for Abner.

All sorts of terrible thoughts crossed the mind of the unhappy young man. He had heard and read of disappointed girls making away with themselves. But *Mehitable*, much as she loved him, sensitive and tender as was her heart, was not the sort of girl to kill herself because her lover had chosen to serve his King and country.

Then the old fear took possession of him, and he crept out of the market-place branded, not only as a deserter, but as a murderer.

He wandered away down to the river-side—that river-side linked in his memory with so many recollections of quiet Sunday walks and evening talks with *Mehitable*.

There was a group of boys and men gathered round something by the old bridge. He approached with a heart full of sickening fears, and almost expected to see poor *Mehitable's* still, dead figure

stretched on the long grass. The group was so absorbed that it did not notice his approach. He peered over the shoulder of a man and saw, not poor, dead *Mehitable* herself, but her clothes: the brown stuff dress, the print apron, the coarse straw-hat—every thing.

With the finger of detection pointed at him in every twig which shot across his path, with the word "murderer" ringing in each joyous bird-trill, he sped away—whither he knew not; but until the evening was far advanced he wandered over the flat stretch of meadow, until, utterly exhausted in mind and body, he crept homewards, and unseen, unheard, shut himself up in his room. There was no fear of interruption, for his father was in Colchester on business, and his mother had grown so accustomed to her son's absences that she now took no note of his outgoings or in-comings.

All the next day he remained there, eating nothing, nor sleeping—simply lying on his bed with dead *Mehitable's* reproachful face ever before him. Early the next morning he was aroused by the distant crash of martial music. He sprang up from the bed, threw open the window, and looked out. Above a cloud of dust he could see the glint of sunshine on steel. Louder and louder grew the music, and the tramp of feet, and nearer came the soldiers.

Then a sudden idea struck him. What was life to him now? The noose of the executioner seemed to dangle over his head already, and any death was welcome to him but that! He hastily huddled on his clothes, went out into the fresh, sweet-scented air, and crept rapidly along by the river path and the fields into Elmford.

When the second battalion of the East Anglian Regiment marched out of Elmford town a week later, there went with it amongst the many recruits in its ranks Abner Harrington, of Cuton.

CHAPTER II.

AT six o'clock in the evening of the eighteenth of June, 1815, the two battalions of the East Anglian Regiment formed one of the thirteen squares, which for three hours had been rolling back and destroying the cuirassiers of Milhaud on the Plateau of Mont Saint Jean. Squares, did we say? Rather, shreds of squares. During these long Sabbath hours, these fresh-faced young heroes had more than kept at bay

the finest cavalry in the world ; and still, at six o'clock, shattered and torn, with three-quarters of their officers killed, with flags hanging in shreds, faint with fatigue and thirst, running short of cartridges, they were defiant.

Abner Harrington was there. Of what he had gone through during these hours he had but a confused idea ; but he knew that he who had never killed a living creature wilfully in his life had struck, and thrust, and parried ; had cheered with delirious joy as some colossal horseman reared in his saddle and fell head downwards, shot through the head, or pierced by bayonet thrust ; had laughed in death's face, and had been in the midst of the sickening slaughter, and maiming and wounding, without one single impulse to turn away. Not a man who had stood near him when the battle opened was by him now ; his face was begrimed with powder and dust, his white epaulets, his cross-belts, and his hands were stained with blood ; his shako had been alashed away, there was a stinging sensation in one shoulder, and a long, bloody rent in one leg.

He had caught the terrible infection of war ; the ceaseless commands, "Close up the ranks !" or "Open the ranks !" or "Step up there !" were as music in his ears ; and no power on earth but death would have moved him from his position behind that ghastly barricade of dead men.

Suddenly a great wall of horses and steel-clad men rose up before him out of the smoke-drifts ; there was a sharp, bright, straight flash in the air ; a red body seemed to cut across the flash for a moment, a deluge of warm blood spurted over him, and he knew no more.

When he came to himself again he was sensible of chilliness, and of a rough, jolting movement.

"Where am I ?" he murmured.

"Going to Brussels in a cart," was the reply of his neighbour.

"What's been going on ?" he asked.

"Going on ! Whoi, we've whopped Boney properly, that's what's been going on," was the answer.

Abner tried to raise himself, but a pang of fearful pain extorted a cry from his lips, and he swooned off again.

All through that terrible night he jolted on. Early in the morning he recovered consciousness again. They had left the forest behind them, and were passing through open country dotted with houses.

Presently they rattled under an imposing gateway, and by the broad streets and the crowds of people, Abner knew it was Brussels. He raised himself with a painful effort, and saw that the cart in which he was, contained a dozen other poor fellows from every regiment engaged, all in various stages of suffering, and that before and behind, as far as the eye could reach, stretched a line of carts similarly laden.

Presently they halted in front of a church, and were lifted out, and Abner Harrington found himself, for the first time, in that terrible world, a military hospital in war-time. It was very dark, so dark that, although it was midday, the lamps were lit, and Abner could only make out multi-coloured heaps strewn about the floor in all directions ; amongst which moved men with their shirt-sleeves rolled up, the dark, weird forms of sisters of mercy, and red-coated soldiers, whilst the sickening smell, and the chorus of agony which rolled from end to end of the building, the cries of delirium, the entreaties for water, completed a scene which made a far deeper impression on him than had the battle itself.

His mattress was in one of the darkest corners of the dark church, in an alcove, behind the high altar. Here he lay for some hours, awaiting his turn with the surgeons.

The wound which had incapacitated him was a bad one, for the edge of a sabre had cut clean through his shoulder to the collar-bone. "And," remarked the surgeon, "if that brave comrade of yours hadn't taken the worst part of the blow to himself, you would have been still lying on Mont Saint Jean."

For a fortnight Abner remained in the church of the Augustines. During all this time he was waited on by one of the convalescent soldiers who helped the staff of regular nurses in their overwhelming task—a man who had lost his right arm and the lower part of whose face was hidden in bandages.

Never had sufferer more gentle or more patient nurse, or one who, deprived of the power of speech, could more readily interpret signs, and anticipate wants. He had, however, half-a-dozen other sufferers to attend to, each of whom seemed to regard him, as did Abner, with genuine affection ; and Abner, who was longing to seize the first opportunity of opening his heart to some one, could not see enough of him. By fits and starts, however, he did

manage to pour out his trouble and tell the story of his life, and often during the course of the narration felt a sympathetic pressure of the hand laid on his, which spoke all that the sealed lips of the listener would have said.

Still, with even the light of this kind nurse breaking through the gloom, it was a terrible fortnight. Happily Abner's position behind the high altar hid from him the heartrending scenes which were hourly being enacted in the body of the church; but he could hear the cries and groans, and he even learned the meaning of a certain measured tramp of heavy feet along the stone floor, for they had more than once visited his neighbourhood, and each time they had borne away a rigid, silent figure wrapped up in a military cloak.

The hospital accommodation was utterly inadequate to the enormous demands made on it, so that patients were discharged as soon as it was possible to remove them without risk, and their places were immediately filled up. The cartloads of wounded, who had come into Brussels with Abner, represented but a fraction of those who had been torn and maimed in the battle; and every day exploring parties brought in men who had wandered away to the woods, or to farms and cottages, whilst the number of those who were yet undiscovered could never be estimated.

So Abner received his discharge long before he felt that he could move without help. His last duty before leaving was to bid his kindly nurse good-bye, and to thank him.

"I can never forget your kindness," said the young man, "and I don't deserve any, for I have told you the story of my life. But I have been spared through all this danger, and I have learned to know that bad as I wur before, I wur still worse when I sought death. I daren't return home; but I'm main sure that I shall find myself there some time or other, if it only be to find out if my poor Mehitable was ever discovered, and to see where they've laid her."

Then he pressed the nurse's hand, and limped out.

For six weeks longer he remained in the convalescent hospital established in a Benedictine Monastery, situated in the outskirts of the city. Perfect rest and kind treatment at the hands of the brothers, restored him sufficiently to health to be able to leave Brussels with his battalion for Amiens, where it was to be quartered

during the occupation of France by the allied armies.

He paid a last visit to the Angustines' Church before leaving, in order to see his soldier nurse once again, but was told that he had left for England with his battalion.

Almost exactly on the anniversary of the day when Abner Harrington had parted from Mehitable Buttrick with an angry speech on his lips, the London "Royal Blue" coach set him down at the door of the "Black Boy" in Elmford. He passed along the front of the inn to a back-lane unrecognised, and proceeded to the river.

He paused for a few moments by the bridge where Mehitable's clothes had been found, and then pushed on with slow, uncertain steps, towards Cuton. Only a year had passed since he had last trod this path, yet so much had happened during that brief span, that he seemed surprised to find his surroundings so little altered.

It was Saturday, and Abner could already see the boys flocking off to the cricket-field by Summerfield Church, and more than one pair of lovers strolling over the distant fields.

With something of the old dread over him, he wanted to avoid meeting any one, and so turned off into the woodland, away from the towing-path. About the copses and thickets, under the fresh, bright lattice-work of young leaves, he wandered until the sun set amidst a royal profusion of many-tinted clouds, which gradually drifted away, and left a pure, unbroken expanse of blue, dotted here and there with an early star.

Then he quitted the woodland shades and retraced his steps towards the river, and pursued his way more boldly in the direction of Cuton. He would make himself known as little as possible, for he simply wanted to hear about poor Mehitable, and then he would turn his back on his native village for ever.

It was dark when he reached the first houses in Cuton village; but there was the usual Saturday night assembly at the door of the "Red Lion," and in it there would certainly be some who would at once recognise him, altered in appearance as he was after his year's absence.

So, feeling very much as he felt on the night of his discovery that Mehitable had disappeared, he crept along on the opposite side of the street under the shadow of the cottage eaves, and only breathed freely

when he arrived within sight of John Buttrick's cottage.

Strange, he thought, that a man who had faced Napoleon's cavalry and the dangers and horrors of a military hospital, should be afraid to face the companions of his boyhood, the inhabitants of an obscure little English village.

There was a carriage and pair at the keeper's lodge gate—a most unusual occurrence—a reason for which Abner was at a loss to find. He waited until he saw a tall man in a long cloak, accompanied by a lady, enter it and drive away; then he crossed the road on tiptoe, pushed open the little wicket-gate, crossed the patch of garden, and peered in through the window.

There!—seated in the big arm-chair at the table, just as he had seen her a hundred times, was *Mehitable Buttrick*! She was closely wrapped in a woollen shawl, and was examining closely something in a case: a portrait, a brooch, or something.

He drew back, trembling all over. The joy was so great that it had almost stunned him. Had he been dreaming? Had he really ever left *Cuton* and gone for a soldier with the brand of *Cain* searing his forehead?

It was some time before he could collect himself sufficiently to make a move towards the door, open it, and announce himself. He crept away to the porch seat, and tried to grasp the infinity of his happiness. *Mehitable* would probably spurn him and refuse to speak to him; but she was alive, and he was cleared of one foul crime. Perhaps she had given her heart to some one else; for, plain-looking as she was, her sterling qualities marked her out as an excellent help-mate in life to many a young fellow in the neighbourhood. At any rate, he could ask her forgiveness, tell her what he had gone through, and how he had tried to wipe off some of the stain on his name by serving his country.

So he opened the door. *Mehitable* hastily put out of sight the object at which she had been looking, and said:

"Why, Abner, I am glad to see you!"

"Are you really," gasped the young man, "are you really glad to see me after all that I have done? Oh, *'Hitable*, it's a new life to me. I thought as how you was dead, that you'd drowneded yourself acause of me. I didn't expect it, and I don't deserve it; but I be so thankful."

She was standing gazing at him, a smile of real pleasure on her face, which seemed to have grown broader, more good-hu-

moured, and more freckled than ever during the past year. Still she was there in the sturdy flesh, and that was all he cared. Even if she were to tell him with her next breath that she had transferred her affections, or that she could never forgive him, he could have borne it, so great was his joy at seeing her alive.

Here John Buttrick, her father, came in. He greeted Abner with a tremendous grip of the hand, and a hearty, "Glad to see ye again, Muster Abner." Then Mrs. Buttrick came in, and she, too, smiled and welcomed him. But none of them showed any amazement at his arrival, and he noted it, thinking that evidently no one in *Cuton* knew even that he had enlisted.

"You look wonnerful sadly, Muster Abner," said the keeper.

"I wonder I'm here at all," said Abner. "I've been at death's door a score of times."

"Oh!" was the only reply to this. "Really now, have ye? What ye been arter? Sodgering?"

Abner nodded. This was not the hero-worship which he had been accustomed to see bestowed on returned soldiers. He could not understand it, and still less when he thought he saw the keeper evidently trying to suppress a laugh.

"D'ye hear that, *'Hitable*? Muster Abner's been a-sodgering," said the keeper, nudging his daughter.

"Well, *'Hitable*, and now tell me about yourself," said Abner, feeling just a little annoyed, although without reason, as he knew. "You seem to fare good tidily."

"No, I want to hear about you," said the girl.

So Abner related all that had happened from the moment he enlisted for the first time, until he arrived at the hospital in *Brussels*.

Here he paused. During his narration he had kept his eyes riveted on *Mehitable*, and he noticed that not only did she keep on the woollen shawl, although the night was warm, but that she used only her left hand.

"*'Hitable*," he said, "what is the matter with your right hand?"

"I've—I've lost the use of it," stammered the girl, "from an accident. Please go on. You got to the hospital—yes?"

The keeper was shaking with suppressed laughter. There was even a bright light in Mrs. Buttrick's eyes. Abner could not for the life of him make it out, for assuredly never was story more devoid of a comic element than that which he had been telling.

So he rose, and quietly lifted the shawl off Mehitable's shoulders.

The right arm was gone from the shoulder.

"Mehitable!" cried Abner, "what does this mean? How did you have this done? Wur I the cause of it?"

"You wur! You wur!" roared the keeper, unable any longer to suppress his feelings. "If it hadn't been for you, her arm would have been as fast as yourn!"

Abner looked at him, then at Mrs. Buttrick, then at Mehitable.

"It ain't of no use," continued the keeper. "I'm a real bad 'un to keep a secret, I am; but——"

"Stop, father—stop!" said the girl. "Let me tell it. Abner, do you mind the night the sodgers went away—the first lot, I mean—you got drunk, very drunk?"

"Yes, I do. Well?"

"Well, I had been looking for you fur two days, fur I had an idea you'd gone and 'listed; and I was giving it up as a bad job, when all of a sudden I seed you lying down in Simpson's out-house. I'd read the notices all about deserting. I knew you couldn't be up in time to answer your name, and that they'd find you. Well, so I took your things, and I answered your name, after I'd put my own duds away under the bridge."

"You went for a sodger, and you was at Waterloo!" exclaimed Abner, in utter amazement.

"Yes she wur! that she wur!" exclaimed the keeper, in a voice of triumph. "And where's that thing the Colonel brought ye just now?"

"Never mind that, father," said the girl. "Yes, I was at Waterloo, Abner, and I lost my arm there; and I was in the church——"

Abner sprang to his feet.

"And you were that kind, good nurse, who couldn't speak!" he cried. "Oh, 'Hitable! 'Hitable! why didn't you tell me?"

"But she ain't told you the best part, Muster Abner," said the keeper. "She wouldn't ha' told us, but the Colonel, who's

staying up at the Hall, he told us how she'd saved your life, and lost her arm in doing of it; and this very evening he browt her a silver medal bigger than a crown piece."

This was too much for Abner. He dropped his head on his arms and cried bitterly. Mehitable raised his face to hers, and said:

"Abner, I did my duty, that was all."

"No, 'Hitable, it warn't your duty to do all this for a worthless vagabone like me," said the young man. "But how did you get on with the fighting?"

"I didn't fight, Abner," replied the girl. "They saw I knew nothing about muskets or drill, so they told me off to help the surgeons."

"Yes, and you should hear what the Colonel has to say about her," said John Buttrick; "that she didn't care no more for bullets, and swords, and them things than I does for flies."

"But I've always loved you, dear," said Abner. "And when I came into the village and no one could tell where you were, and I saw your clothes lying under Elmford Bridge, I said I'd just go and look for death, as I made sure I'd as good as murdered you. And may I love you still, 'Hitable?"

"Yes, Abner. I am happy now," answered the girl.

So, in a few weeks Abner Harrington and Mehitable Buttrick were married at Cuton Church, and the Colonel of the regiment not only attended the ceremony in full uniform, but made the bridal pair a handsome present, on the condition that both should wear their medals in the church. They did; and old Olly Turner, who died the other day at Cuton, used often to describe the unique ceremony of marriage between young Abner Harrington and the girl he loved, who had but one arm and wore the Waterloo medal on her wedding-dress, adding that he "minded it wur a rainy April mornin', but as the weddin' party came out of John Buttrick's cottage the sun came out and stopped out all day."

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A CASE OF DELUSION.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOFF.

CHAPTER I.

THE Janssens came of a respectable old Dutch family, and claimed, among their ancestors, that famous artist of the same name, who has painted the best picture of the carnal delight of eating and drinking within my knowledge. They had been settled in England for many years, and the present Janssens were half English by blood; but they had certain distinctively Dutch points about them, although there was no strong resemblance between the respective existing members of the family—only three in all—and the elder of the two sisters had inherited her mother's dark eyes and hair.

There was, first, the man of the house, my friend Hendrik, who came half-way between his sisters, Mechtilde and Jacqueline, in age. He was a good-looking fellow, with the pale-blue, limpid, slow-moving, but exceedingly acute eyes of his ancestral race, and something in his gait irresistibly suggestive of skating. He never practised that art to my knowledge; but when we started for one of our long walks, he would throw his head back, fold his rather short arms across his chest—I could not have carried my arms so for two minutes—and give a peculiar roll to his ankles. Then I would be reminded of whole galleries of pictures of Dutch people skating cheerfully on frozen canals under grey

skies, to and from the market-places of their quaint, old, red-roofed towns.

Hendrik was the best of fellows, but taciturn, and remarkably prudent for a young man. He was a photographer by profession, and had already obtained a fair share of success. His sisters lived with him, in the small house at Hampstead, that formed a part of the modest provision which his father—who died when the three children were young—had been able to make for them.

The Janssens were in mourning for their mother when I made their acquaintance, and I dare say her plain black garments aided me to define the impression produced upon me by the elder sister. It was like remembrance. I knew I had never met her previously; but where had I seen somebody strikingly like her?

Presently, when she rose and stood by the open window, placing one of her large, finely-shaped hands on the back of a chair, while she looked straight before her at the shadows on the hearth, I found the link of association—it was of Margaret von Eyck that she reminded me. Of Margaret von Eyck in the vast study in which she and her brother painted "The Adoration of the Lamb." Not from her English mother—with the soft-brown Devonshire eyes and the dusky-brown Devonshire hair—had Mechtilde Janssen got her colouring. It was that of the Low Countries—quite a different thing. She was a tall, well-built woman, thirty years old at the time of which I write, a little too much abstracted to be sweet, but with reserves of sweetness as we soon learned, with a high, square brow,

an even, colourless, olive complexion. Her face was full of capacity and endurance. The long, thin, finely-marked lines of the eyebrows, and the fulness of the dark-fringed eyelids were especially noticeable. Her manner was gracious, well-bred, but uninteresting to an habitual observer of manner as I in my capacity of fiction-monger am bound to be: and it conveyed the effect of preoccupation beyond the ordinary cares of a small household and a mode of life which was, at any rate, comfortable and leisurely.

One is tempted, having reached a conclusion respecting anybody, to fancy that one's earliest impressions tended that way. We use the hateful phrase—"I told you so"—as often to ourselves as to other people. I will not yield to the temptation in this instance. When I first saw Mechtilde Janssen the only impression I carried away was that one which I have recorded: her resemblance to Margaret von Eyck.

It was a good deal later, and after the Janssens had become supremely interesting to me for a personal reason, that I began to be convinced there had been a story in the life of the elder sister, and to wonder what it was. I did not entertain any hope that I should learn, unless, indeed, a contingency—then so remote as to be almost out of common-sense sight—should be realised, and by that means I should come to share the confidences of a family singularly little given to talk of their affairs.

It was impossible not to wish to know whether I was right; very difficult to keep curiosity absolutely out of my demeanour, especially after I had become a constant visitor at the Janssens' house and Hendrik's intimate friend. They were quiet people, and the sisters revealed their hereditary proclivities by an unusual attention to domestic affairs. They neither slaved nor fussed; they sacrificed none of their intellectual tastes to housekeeping; but never have I been admitted to a near view of so exquisitely-kept a house as theirs. In it order reigned, without preliminary warfare, and dainty cleanliness reached the height of a fine art, without ostentation, exasperation, or any patient male sufferers being driven to sigh for a little dirt with tranquillity. Tasteful simplicity was the "note" of the house; and self-respect, dignity, sympathy—those things which mere wealth cannot give—were the chief characteristics of its inmates.

It did not take me long to discover whose was the master-mind in all their inventions, devices, and arrangements, the results of which were so satisfactory; and further, that the master-mind was constantly at work for the benefit and the comfort of others, but did little on her own behalf in things external, being full of that story, whatever it might be, of whose existence I had no right to indicate a suspicion.

Mechtilde Janssen was at once the centre of the household system and the life of the lives of her brother and sister, and yet apart from their current and accidents. I remember, when the puzzle and problem of my perception that so it was came to me, there flashed into my mind the recollection of a story I had read in my boyhood, about a woman who had been taken by force out of a convent—in which she had pronounced her vows—and brought into the great world, wherein she played her part; but always with the heart, the spirit, and the isolation of the cloister; and I associated this story with the impression that Hendrik's elder sister produced upon me.

I come now to the third member of the little household—Jacqueline. She was ten years her sister's junior, just twenty when I first knew them, and totally unlike her in personal appearance, save that she, too, was of tall stature. Take the sunny and joyous beauty of one of those glorious Dutch women whom Rubens has made to live for ever on his canvases, divest it of every touch of coarseness, leaving the youth, the health, the strength, the gladness unaltered, invest that figure with the grace that Vandyke gave to the great ladies whom he portrayed, and you will have a notion of Jacqueline Janssen as she was when I saw her first in the springtide, among the tulips and hyacinths in her little conservatory. I prided myself in those days on my powers of observation, and my quick perception of the possibilities of a "subject;" but although her beauty shone on me like sudden sunlight, it did not suggest any notion of that kind. No, no, in a very short time I knew quite well that Hendrik's sister was indeed a fitting heroine for a story; for the story, not of my fancy, but of my life. At first I could only feel "this is the most beautiful girl in the world;" nor has her loveliness—with which I honestly and manfully confess

I fell in love at once, and offhand, without an instant's troublesome speculation concerning her moral and intellectual endowments—lost its charm for me, now that I have good reason to know how profound was the wisdom of that typical act of folly. The episode in my experience which I am about to relate, has, however, nothing to do with my true love, so I may dismiss that topic in a few words. Its course ran with unusual smoothness, except in the direction of money. I had no income beyond what I made by my pen; and although I had been graciously described in one or two influential journals as a promising writer, I could not venture, until the indicated promise had progressed into performance, to ask a beautiful young girl, who had never experienced a day's real discomfort, or a serious privation in her life, to share so uncertain a lot. I am not going to state how soon it was after I had fallen in love with Jacqueline at first glimpse, that she consented to hold herself engaged to me, and to wait for ever so long. I am sure, for all that, she expected the novel I was then writing to raise me to the zenith of literary fame within a week of its publication. Suffice it to say, we were engaged; we were prepared to wait, and we were happy. So was Hendrik. His disinterested nature came out strongly under these circumstances. Unlike most brothers whom I have observed, he recognised his sister's beauty, and he did not regard her as a bore. Hendrik might have anticipated a far better match for her than myself; and he was not a romantic person by any means—nevertheless, he was satisfied. My permanent abode was a small flat in an unfashionable quarter of London. Hendrik carried on his business in Oxford Street; it was our custom in fine weather to walk out to Hampstead together after his business hours, and the sisters would sometimes come to meet us. Hampstead wore a glorified aspect in those days, and indeed the place has never become commonplace to me.

I was not certain of Mechtilde's feelings about her sister and myself. We were not very intimate, she and I, and I sometimes fancied that I had not succeeded in concealing from her the curiosity with which she inspired me, and that she silently resented it. She had received the news of my proposal to her sister without the least surprise—Hendrik, man and brother-like, had not suspected that any such thing was

in contemplation—she had spoken very kindly to me; she had done everything to render my position in the house, in the always awkward character of an accepted lover, as pleasant as possible; she had not objected to my vague prospects. Still, I knew there was something, and after I had said so to Jacqueline, and she had pointed out to me all the particulars of her sister's conduct which I have just stated, I could not pretend to be convinced, but repeated that there certainly was—something! I could not help observing that Mechtilde's clear, olive cheek grew a shade more pale at times, when her dark, solemn eyes rested on her sister's sunny beauty, and that the slow smile which transformed her face when it crossed it, came more rarely. Did she dislike me? Did she distrust me? Was she not sure of Jacqueline's feelings? What was it? The sense of this something disturbed me, and of course I could not refrain from worrying Jacqueline about it; no doubt my vanity was at the bottom of my disquiet.

At last she turned a little pettish, and said:

"I don't believe there is anything at all; but, if there be, it is only Mechtilde's dislike of a long engagement."

This explanation made my mind easier, but it somewhat injured my estimate of Mechtilde's good sense. She could not possibly dislike the delay of my marriage with her sister so much as I did; but she was unable, it seemed, to see it in the same light.

A few happy months had fled; I had finished my novel, and confided it to a publisher, and Jacqueline was beginning to count the days until it should be out in all glory of three volumes, red cloth binding, and a title-page of the magical mystical order.

Many were the projects we formed for employing the brief interval of leisure which I proposed to allow myself, but not one of them was based upon the real requirement in a case of tired brain—entire change of scene and surroundings. When Hendrik pointed this out, and although I received his suggestion with gross ingratitude, I knew he was right.

"My real holidays and yours don't fit in," he said. "I follow the fashion of the swells, you know, and leave town when they do, because they no longer require my clever posing, artistic grouping, and so on. I could not say let us make a party

and go anywhere for more than a couple of days, and so it will end in your mooning about Hampstead a good deal, and taking the girls to crowded exhibitions and hot theatres by way of a thorough rest to your weary brain. I suppose it does take a great deal out of one," he added, thoughtfully, with a queer look at me; for my profession of light literature was as incomprehensible to him as his photographer's art was to me.

We were satisfied with this state of things; neither of us ever attempted to investigate the methods of the other, although Hendrik was free of my writing-room, and I was free of his medicinally-smelling premises, with their incongruous properties. I had even once been in a dark chamber, with a great deal of green baize about it, where his incomprehensible slides underwent certain processes, the least mysterious of which he called the bath, and where alarming facilities were afforded for hideously disfiguring one's hands with corrosive fluids.

"It takes just as much out of one, my dear fellow," was my answer, "as any other work, which is the business of a man's life, takes out of him, if he does it honestly. There is a deal of nonsense talked about brain-work; everything is brain-work for the matter of that; and we all want a holiday after a spell."

Two evenings later, when I went to his studio in Oxford Street to pick up Hendrik for our customary walk out to Hampstead, I found him waiting for me with what for him was impatience and excitement.

"Anything unusual? Anything wrong?" I asked.

"Something unusual, but not wrong; although you may make it much more right if you will do what I want. Come on; I'll tell you all about it when we get out of the worst of the crowd."

He hurried me along, walking with that odd suggestion of skating in his gait, and presently, turning up a shabby short-cut to which we rarely resorted, he began to tell me his news.

"You remember Potter," he said, "the man with a craze for craniology? I did all the illustrations for his big book last autumn, and he was greatly pleased with them."

"Certainly. I remember, too, some remarks which he made about my own skull, and that I considered them more learned than polite."

"That's the man," said Hendrik, nodding his round head approvingly. "He thinks nothing of manners when his favourite theories are in question. A man is to him merely a skull with appendages. However, he is a very good fellow for all that, and he came to me to-day to put a good thing in my way. It has come in his rather sadly; however, there is no one's grief in this world but profit is made out of it by somebody. He has sent me business before now, though not anything like so good as the present offer. There is a certain great lady—I do not know, and do not want to learn her name—who has an only son to whom she is devotedly attached, and the unfortunate young man, being supposed by his relations and friends to be travelling in remote places among Indians and grizzlies, is in reality hopelessly, but harmlessly insane, and confined in a lunatic asylum in Paris, where he does not bear his own name—I suspect it carries a title. It is a case of delusion, Potter says; the poor fellow is just like himself, and reasonable on all but one point. Of course I did not ask what that point is, nor did I enquire how Potter—who started by telling me that he is in no way related to the lady or her son—comes to be entrusted with so delicate a secret. This, however, he explained by imputing the lady's confidence to her sympathy with his studies in craniology, and her faith in his theories on the subject of madness; these, I suspect, are largely pervaded by his own crank. It appears, besides, that the lady and he are old friends, and that she is so unhappy about the possibility of her son's being badly or erroneously treated that she felt herself constrained to appeal to Potter."

"All this is quite intelligible," I observed; "but how does it apply to you?"

"I'm coming to that. The poor mother had it all settled with Potter that he and she were to go to Paris to see the young man, that Potter was to investigate every particular of his treatment, and that she was to remove him if things were not according to Potter's notions, when she was suddenly taken ill. It was a partial stroke of paralysis. She is recovering the use of the affected limb, but a journey is wholly out of the question for a long time, if not for always. With the intensity of the fancy of a sick woman, who is also a rich woman, she has begun to long for a sight of her son as he is now. That he is still

insane she entertains no doubt. He writes to her, and reiterates his delusion every time; but she wants to judge of the treatment he receives by his looks. I think you begin to see it now. She wants a portrait of him, since she cannot go to him, and Potter has told her that no one will make so faithful a likeness for her as the gifted individual who executed the incomparable illustrations for his book. It is preposterous, and I told him so. There are first-rate fellows in my line in Paris; but Potter is obstinate. Potter has promised the lady; Potter offers me a sum that will make it well worth my while to undertake the commission—the affair of three days. I can manage that. He is coming with me to report to the poor mother on the case, and”—here Hendrik stood still to laugh—“the queer old fellow has his own little game, too.”

“How! What?”

“I wish you could have seen him standing on his toes, nipping my arm, and peering into my face with his bright little eyes through those spectacles of his, which I believe belonged to his grandfather, while he told me, chuckling, of the astute design he had in his mind. It appears he and the doctor who keeps the lunatic asylum are old acquaintances, and correspond from time to time about their respective fads. From information recently received, Potter believes that the doctor has some rather remarkable skulls in his charge just now, specimens which jump—if you will allow me to use the expression—with his ideas of what the skulls in whose inside certain kinds of madness ought to be lodged should be like; and his little game is to get photographs of those skulls. He mentioned with great glee that two of them were closely shaved; and added ‘providentially!’ I objected that the doctor would hardly like to order patients to sit for their portraits like convicts; but he snapped his eyes a dozen times in sheer exultation as he answered: ‘My good scrupulous creature, there never was a madman yet with a skull of the kind I hope to get, who would not have sat for a score of portraits with the greatest alacrity.’ It is a strange turn-up, isn’t it; but I like the notion somehow. And now about you. I want you to come with us.”

“I should not think Mr. Potter would like that!”

“Potter won’t mind. I answer for him; and the little trip will do you all the

good in the world. Besides”—here Hendrik looked very serious and peculiarly Dutch—“does not one of your people say the novelist ought to be always on the look out for ‘human documents’? I should think a lunatic asylum would be a likely place to find some.”

After a little more discussion I consented to go with Hendrik to Paris; and no sooner had I done so than the facts he had related, and the possibilities of our projected expedition, took hold of my imagination with great force. The invalid mother, the insane son, whose case was one of delusion, the pretext used to deceive the world, which would be so cheerfully indifferent to the truth, the mad doctor and his possible ways, the whole matter as it was and as it might be, began to assume the sort of interest, of which, no doubt, every writer of fiction has experience. Hendrik, I suppose, was absorbed in it from his own point of view, for we hardly spoke at all during the remainder of our walk.

In the course of the evening we communicated our intentions to the sisters; but without mention of the object of Hendrik’s commission. They were not unduly inquisitive; and Jacqueline took a cheerful view of my temporary absence. Mechtilde made no comment upon my part in the matter; but addressed herself to the question of Hendrik’s requirements for the journey. As we were to start by the mail train on the next morning but one, I took leave of the sisters that night. I had stayed late; the weather was very fine; the moon was sailing low down in a serene, steel-coloured sky; I should have a pleasant walk for a part of the way into town. Mechtilde and Hendrik stood discreetly at the gate, while Jacqueline accompanied me a little way along the broad path bordering the heath. I turned for a moment to glance backwards in the moonlight, and caught Mechtilde’s gaze, seemingly pursuing me with foreboding mistrust. I had ceased to observe her recently; but that last glimpse of her brought back my former fancies. I felt it was not to me her look was directed, but to the raised ghost of that story which I had never read.

CHAPTER II.

THE handsome house in which the patients of the well-known Dr. Marlot live out their dreary lives, with such alleviations

of their sad case as advanced science and modern ingenuity have provided, stands in well-kept, and, for the situation, extensive grounds, at Nenilly. The doctor impressed me favourably, although I met him with something of the reluctance which the presence of a gaoler would inspire. He was a short, slight man, with keen, but kind eyes, and a straightforward manner.

Potter and he were old acquaintances; and I thought I could detect in the shrewd Frenchman some lurking amusement with Potter's fad. He was very polite to us all, and personally conducted us over a large portion of the establishment. It was easy to see that the doctor's patients belonged to the wealthy classes only. The appointments of the house were luxurious; and we saw several of the patients out in the grounds who were, no doubt, under strict surveillance, but nothing of the kind was apparent.

Among my studies from life a visit to a lunatic asylum had not until now been included, and I was immediately struck—as I suppose every one is on seeing that sad sight for the first time—by the isolation expressed in each face. Of the well-dressed, quiet gentlemen, of whom we saw, perhaps, a dozen, each one looked and moved as though he alone existed in that scene, and as though the doctor's grounds, with their graceful trees, flowering shrubs, smooth, winding walks, and gay parterres, were Sahara itself. The weather was warm, and the patients carried their hats in their hands in most cases, to the huge satisfaction of Potter, whose stealthy glances at the skulls—I am sure he was longing to handle them—made him look much more mad than any one whom we saw.

Dr. Marlot informed us that Mr. Clement Winthrop had been apprised of his mother's wish and our expected arrival, and that he had taken kindly to the humouring of her fancy.

Hendrik had borrowed the heavy portion of his apparatus from a friend in his own profession, who practised it with the assistance of Paris sunshine, and at once set to work at his incomprehensible preparations in a favourable position on the smooth lawn. The appearance of the camera and its appendages—I may mention here that I was supposed to have come with Hendrik in the apocryphal character of his assistant—had aroused the attention of some of the least preoccupied of the poor gentlemen in the grounds, and the doctor had skilfully contrived that

among those who came up to the spot we occupied, and looked on with a fitful curiosity, the two skulls so coveted by Potter should be included.

I was too new to such sights to be capable of deriving amusement from anything inside the walls of a prison for the separated ones; but I was aware that Potter's demeanour was very funny, and that the doctor's method of suggesting to the skulls to have themselves photographed, while Hendrik was waiting for his ostensible sitter, was admirable. I don't know what were the different forms taken by the insanity of the two gentlemen; beyond the almost invariable leaden complexion and haggard eyes they were not remarkable in appearance; but I saw at once that Potter had been right about the personal vanity which may be generally looked for in the insane. The skulls were middle-aged, and could hardly have been well-looking at any time; but if they had been professional beauties, or savages of distinction, they could not have displayed greater eagerness to have their portraits taken, or a more punctilious jealousy about precedence under the operation.

Potter stood on his toes, nipped my arm, and hailed the doctor's decision on the latter nice point with innumerable flickers of his eyelids. Hendrik was operating on the second skull when Mr. Clement Winthrop joined the group on the lawn. The others were intent upon the camera; but I had turned away, and was looking towards the house, so that I saw him approaching, and instantly discerned that his gait, his face, and his entire deportment were unlike those of the other patients. He did not walk briskly; but he walked with a purpose. There was not about him that indescribable something which I had always felt in the aspect of one mentally afflicted, even in the most harmless way, with a painful thrill of the nerves, and an involuntary shrinking. Presently he was shaking hands with Potter, and afterwards with myself; and then we three stood together, waiting for the emergence of Hendrik from under the stifling black veil. The sitting of the second skull was over; and while the subsequent mysteries were being enacted with the alides, I observed the man whose fate filled me with a profound and also puzzled pity, and I saw that he glanced occasionally at me with curiosity. In those looks there was neither furtiveness nor

vagueness, and I had caught but few of them before I said to myself: "This man is not mad." Let me try to place him before you, as I saw him only a few minutes before I was convinced of my egregious error. His age was about thirty-five; his stature tall; he held himself with the ease and grace of an Englishman accustomed to good society; the pose of his well-shaped head was remarkably fine; his face was not handsome, but distinguished-looking; his hair and eyes were dark. He had one little trick of manner; but it would hardly have attracted any attention less concentrated than mine. This was an occasional twitch of the head, as though he were shaking off a fly, and a quick, upward glance. His figure, well-knit and muscular, suggested unusual strength; but there was no coarseness or heaviness about it. The expression of his face was profoundly sad, yet it had not the vague and mauling wretchedness of the melancholy maniac. It was not that of a man with whom one might not unreasonably reason. Every moment my interest in Mr. Winthrop grew. Hendrik had been right; here was a human document worth the perusal. I had thought more of the mother than of the son, in the story he had told me; but now, looking at the man, with the impression that he was not mad growing rapidly into a conviction, I felt sure he was not kept in this place against his will. That is a point on which one can no more be mistaken in the case of a madman than in the case of a prisoner. Little as I know of the former as a class, I knew so much as this; they all want to get out. Now, if Winthrop were not mad, and yet remained in a lunatic asylum with his own consent, what did it mean? At this point I pulled up my imagination, but not without a great desire to learn the real story of the man's detention.

"The weather is changing," said Dr. Marlot, while Hendrik was still busy with his slides, and the result of his operation on the second skull was still uncertain. "I am afraid we shall have a storm."

As he spoke we heard a thunder-growl. A storm we had, in a few minutes, of the genuine Paris kind, and the camera had to be smothered up in tarpaulin, and Mr. Winthrop's sitting postponed until after luncheon. This vexatious occurrence brought about the fulfilment of my wish, and also dispelled my foolish notion that Mr. Winthrop was sane.

A broad verandah with a glass roof, supported by iron pillars covered with creeping plants, was one of the pleasant features of Dr. Marlot's house, and after luncheon we adjourned thither, to smoke cigars, and watch the dispersal of the storm. I was standing apart from the others when Winthrop came up to me and said:

"Will you walk here for a while with me, Mr. Carleton? You have observed me closely; you know I am not mad, as well as I know it. I should like to tell you the truth about myself, because you are the only person who will listen to my story without a previously-formed conviction that it is the creation of a madman's fancy."

He spoke with supreme calmness and ease, twitched his head, glanced upwards in the way I had already noticed, and waited for my reply. I looked towards the ever-watchful doctor; he gave me a slight nod of assent, and I at once turned away from the direction of the others and walked by the side of Winthrop to the end of the verandah. I did not speak; his reading of my thoughts, and his intention, as I supposed, to make an appeal to me of some kind, had surprised me out of the power of words. I was driven by this surprising incident to abandon the belief that he was a voluntarily-incarcerated patient of Dr. Marlot's. He set a chair for me, but placed himself with his back against the inner side of the nearest pillar, and, after another twitch and glance, he began to speak, with his eyes directed to my face—very unlike a madman, that, I thought—and his hands loosely clasped in front of him.

"The truth about myself, Mr. Carleton, is that I am sane now, and that I have never been insane, except on the occasion when I committed the act for which I have to work out a life sentence. I dare say you have been told that I am a harmless lunatic—that mine is a case of delusion?"

"I have been told nothing, Mr. Winthrop."

"I will shorten my narrative by putting it as Dr. Marlot would put it, if he were giving you an account of my case. He regards it with great interest. The doctor is a good fellow, a gentleman, and very well read for a specialist. I should find him an agreeable companion, if I could ever get rid of that other one who is so constantly with me that I cannot give my thoughts to anything else, except by a strong effort."

Here his face darkened strangely, and again I saw the twitch and the glance.

"Dr. Marlot would tell you that, five years ago, I, being then thirty years old, in sound health, and possessed of unusual strength and activity, suddenly fell into a state of dementia, accused myself of murder, and insisted on every sort of effort being made to trace the identity of the man whom I believed myself to have murdered, and who was a total stranger to me; that he—Dr. Marlot—was consulted, and pronounced it a pure case of delusion, on all the grounds of science and also of evidence; that I, finding it useless to urge the truth upon persons who were rooted in their own view, and feeling that I was bound to expiate a crime which I knew I had committed, no matter how proofless it remained; and also fearing that I might again be attacked by the momentary mania which had led to it, and that another life might be sacrificed to my own terrible misfortune, and the obstinate incredulity of my friends—this is how he would put my explanation of my case to him, you understand—had willingly given myself into his charge. Finally, all the formalities were complied with, and that I have been in his asylum ever since, a victim to melancholia, and, to the best of his belief, a hopeless case. Do you see it now, Mr. Carleton?"

Never in my life had I found a question so difficult to answer, or a look so difficult to evade. His irrational statement was set forth with a lucid reasonableness which made me feel as if I were going distracted. He resumed with some trouble in his voice:

"Ah, you do not answer! You are not so sure that I am not a madman as you were just now, and you are not clear about my motive for telling you the truth and earnestly desiring you should believe it. But I can explain this easily, if you will only try to put yourself in my place, and take those bare facts into your mind. Five years ago I was in France, making a walking tour through the Pas de Calais, and one evening, at nearly dark, when I was approaching Boulogne-sur-Mer—my destination for the time—by way of the sea coast, and had almost reached the fishing village of Portel, a great storm that had been brewing came on. I knew the fishing boats were out; the sea had been rough all day, and was now coming in with great thundering waves, the tide being nearly full.

I liked to witness the strife of wind and sea; but there suddenly arose a strange hurry in my brain with the whirl and the noise, and I rushed along the edge of the falaise at the top of my speed. There is a steep ascent from the coast by the face of a sand-hill, at a little distance from the village, and just as I was hurrying to the spot at which the crooked path is reached from the level, a man came hurrying up to the top and, with a wild gesture, tried to stop me, uttering some incoherent words. Afterwards I understood that he meant to warn me of the danger of the descent—a great cante of the sand-hill having broken away, twenty feet above the sand and shingle. I suppose he had barely escaped with his life. But the hurry in my brain was whirling and roaring like the winds and waves. I cursed him, struck at him with the loaded head of the heavy stick I carried, and rushed on, still along the falaise, knowing only that he had fallen backwards, and not thinking of him, not thinking of anything except the hurry in my brain."

How steadily he told his story; with what an air of consistency, mad as it was! His face was ill to see, and the twitch and upward glance were frequent.

"You see, Mr. Carleton," he went on, "if I were a madman I could hardly give you so accurate an account of my mental condition. I have not forgotten one sensation of that night—between the time when the storm began to worry me, and the time when I lay down to sleep with my knapsack under my head, in a little thicket, and felt that I must sleep though all the world were being blown to the four winds.

"It was day when I awoke, and remembered, with horror, all about it. There was no hurry in my brain now; there was no fever in my blood; my natural caution had returned to me. I got up and walked back to the off-side of Portel. All along the way I could mark the signs of an extraordinarily high tide; and all along the way I wondered how it was with the man whom I had struck. I supposed he was some one belonging to the village or its neighbourhood. I had no distinct idea of his person. Ignorant as I was of the dangerous rent in the sand-hill, I hoped he had fallen on a ledge of the path and picked himself up, or that he had been picked up and taken care of in the village. Of course I must find him, and make what amends I could for my act of insane

violence. I came to the spot, and once more there was a hurry in my brain; but it did not master me, I mastered it, and with it my loathing reluctance to look over the edge of the sand-hill, lest by any chance he should be lying in the path, maimed by my blow. I looked over; he was not there; but I saw the jagged edge a few feet below, where the rent had been made, and the path destroyed. I saw great masses of earth and sand scattered on the shingle beneath, and heavy drifts of seaweed washed up among them. The tide had come leaping up into the very space left by the rent in the sand-hill. If the man had fallen over the edge he must have been killed by the fall, or carried out by the retreating waves; certain death either way. Who was the man? That, Mr. Carleton, I have never known. I remained in the neighbourhood for some time, but no intelligence reached me; there was no word of any one being missed from the village or the district. I got all the newspapers containing intelligence of the department; but there was not an advertisement, not a notice of any disappearance. I went away, and returned again to the neighbourhood, still there was no sign; there has never been any sign. Somewhere in the world—it may be near to me or far from me—there are people who have been condemned by my act to the agony of suspense—the agony of utter ignorance respecting the fate of one beloved. Whomsoever the man may have been, somebody loved him, somebody wanted him, somebody waited for him at home.”

The acute misery in his voice touched me to the soul. My fancy was highly strung up by this time; more than fancy was aroused now.

“The story is true,” I said to myself; “the man is not mad.” And the man knew that I had said this to myself, and replied to it.

“Once more, Mr. Carleton, you are right. I am glad to see that I have convinced you, because I may now hope to get help. But first, you must learn why I have been helpless. My mother became alarmed by my long absence, and the tone of my rare letters. I had sunk into great despondency; an entire change had passed over me. I would not go to her; she came to me, without giving me any notice; and under the influence of her astonishment and grief on seeing the change in me, I told her

the simple truth as I have told it to you to-day.”

“And she refused to believe your statement?”

“Absolutely. Among those things which I can never forget, is the betrayal by my mother’s face of her first terrible suspicion that I was mad! Her looks, her shrinking, cowering agony might almost have made me so. She consulted her friends, especially Potter, and I let her think I did not know; she got doctors to see me, as though by chance, and I fell in with the pretence. I think they were uncertain for a while, for very close enquiries were made into the possibility of my statement being true. But it was never confirmed in any particular; and when”—his face darkened still more, and his voice changed—“when I was enabled to clear up a portion of the mystery, or, at least, to save them from wasting enquiry in a useless direction, when I could tell them that the man I had killed was not a fisherman or a peasant, but a gentleman, then they resolutely refused to entertain the matter at all. I was pronounced insane; and my poor mother, acting under the advice of her relatives—I have none on my father’s side, and am her only son—consigned me to the care of Dr. Marlo’, of whom I have not to complain in any respect. Observe, Mr. Carleton, I freely consented. The only difference between my mother and myself is the reason for my seclusion. She holds my case to be one of delusion; I know it to be one of homicidal mania, and that sane as I have been ever since that one outbreak—sane, and sad as sane, Heaven is witness—I am not a man to be entrusted with liberty! Now, you have heard me, Mr. Carleton, will you help me?”

Of course, he had told me the truth. Of course, he was now perfectly sane. A sudden outbreak of homicidal mania was not so very rare a phenomenon; this was a clear case of it. I was convinced, and I would do what he asked, provided I should be assured on good authority that the revelation of the truth, and the discovery of the dead man’s identity, would not involve penalties to Winthrop. It was clearly best to assent unconditionally at present; so I assented.

“I will help you, Mr. Winthrop,” I said. “But how am I to do so?”

“Prosecute the enquiry for me. You are a journalist and a novelist; make the facts known; you shall have the exact date, and as close a description of the

face of the man I killed, as I can give you in words. I am no artist, or I might draw his portrait for you with unerring fidelity."

The tone in which he uttered these extraordinary words—a complete contradiction of one of his former statements—sent a thrill through my nerves.

"I don't altogether understand you," I said. "You told me, in the course of your narrative, that you had no distinct idea of the man at the time of the occurrence. You did not see him dead; how then can you describe his face?"

He moved a step nearer to me, laid his hand on my arm, looked straight into my eyes, and made me this awful answer:

"Because a face looks over my shoulder all day long; and in the night, when I wake, I know it is there. What face can it be, but his? And it was when I told my mother that this had come to me, to help me to expiate my crime against the living; it was when I would have had the face described in advertisements, that she refused to believe my story, and they all agreed that I was mad, that it was a case of delusion. Delusion! Mr. Carleton, the face is looking over my shoulder now; it is looking into your eyes; its own are following the changes of your countenance." He had glanced up several times while he spoke, and the action gave terrible reality to this ghastly fancy of his. "It is the face of a young man, a happy, hopeful, handsome young man! It has dark eyes, crisp-curling, dark brown hair, and a smiling mouth; the smile is like a lover's—sweet, musing, and full of memory. And this was he whom I killed!"

Mad! Mad! Mad! I had never seen Winthrop until that day; he was, in the ordinary parlance of the world, nothing to me; but the now overwhelming conviction of his insanity, and the terrible perception of his suffering, caused me acute pain.

"Now, Mr. Winthrop, if you please, all is ready," said a clear, pleasant voice close to us, and Dr. Marlot came up, smiling, but darting a keen look at me. "The light is all it should be, Mr. Janssen tells me, and he is waiting for you."

Winthrop said nothing, but he stepped out from the verandah, and walked briskly towards the group assembled on the lawn.

"I am afraid he has disturbed and distressed you, Mr. Carleton," said the doctor, courteously; "but I thought it better to

let him have it out with you, for I could see that you were puzzled, as any one without special experience in mental disease might naturally be. Mr. Winthrop's is one of the most curious cases of delusion I have ever known."

"Such an awful one! So ghastly, so haunting, so inseparable from himself! The wonder is that it has not driven him to suicide long ago."

The doctor looked very grave, but did not take up my remark.

"This notion of his, that his imaginary crime might be repeated if he were free from restraint, is no doubt well-founded, and its leading to his voluntary submission to detention is very fortunate."

"Most fortunate. Shall we join the others?"

It was weak on my part, but I did not feel able to do so. I shrank from seeing Winthrop again, and longed to get out of the house. I therefore pleaded a forgotten engagement, asked the doctor to tell Hendrik, for me, that he would find me at the Hôtel du Louvre at seven o'clock, and took my leave. I walked from Neuilly to the hotel, feeling myself under a strong necessity for tiring myself out, went to my room—one at a pleasant height above the restless, noisy street—placed myself in an arm-chair in front of the window, which I threw open, and fell asleep—as I had done more than once, on reaching a satisfactory crisis in a novel, or bringing a story to a happy conclusion. The perusal of this particular human document had taken a great deal out of me.

I was awakened by the opening of the door, and looked up.

"Hendrik! My dear fellow, what is the matter?"

He took a seat before replying, and then spoke with extreme gravity.

"Something very strange, and inexplicable. I hardly know how to tell it to you best. You are aware of the nature of that poor young man's delusion? Dr. Marlot told me about it while Winthrop was talking to you. It appears that it was supposed possible there might be some truth in the strange story he told when his insanity revealed itself; but the delusion of the face looking over his shoulder disposed of all that. A horrible idea, is it not? I wished I had not heard it, at least until after I had done my work, it gave me such an uncanny feeling; and yet it was well I had heard it. I got to work, as usual, and got an impression——"

he paused; I bade him, impatiently, go on.

"Lucius," said he, "when I looked at it, Winthrop's was not the only face on the plate. There was another—looking over his shoulder."

I gasped out something.

"Yes, there it was, the face—the delusion of the poor fellow, which is no delusion at all—the proof of the truth of his story, the evidence that here is a sane, but haunted, man shut up from the world. Don't imagine that I am mad, you shall see it for yourself, to-morrow."

I need not repeat what we said to each other about this occurrence. All our speculations were vain; but we indulged in many, nevertheless. Hendrik recovered composure on the amazing matter sooner than I did. He was satisfied to admit that, in the present state of our knowledge, it was impossible to account for the presentation of a phantom of the imagination by a sun-picture; but he had no doubt science would supply an explanation in time. He had, however, more to tell me.

"Lucius," he began again, "not only is the face there; but I know it."

"You know it? Whose face is it?"

"It is the face of Robert Trenchard, whom I believe to have been killed, in a sudden fit of madness, by the man who, in Marlot's mad-house, is called Winthrop; and Mechtilde has mourned him for five years, in utter ignorance of his fate."

"Mechtilde! Was he then——"

"They were lovers; but not actually engaged. Trenchard was an American; he was visiting England when I fell in with him, and we grew intimate. I soon saw how it was with him and my sister, and I spoke to him. He was a reserved fellow, and I knew little or nothing of his affairs. I never learned more than that his parents lived in New York; if I had a notion that his father was a very wealthy man, it was only a notion. It was agreed that he should return to his own country, to make such arrangements as he thought fit—I did not enquire into them—and come back to my sister as a suitor of honour should, if he could bring us an assurance of her being welcome in his family in a strange land. With this understanding they parted. He had to go to France on some business, and meant to take a French steamer for New York. Mechtilde had deferred to my wish that she should not

write to him until he had written to her; but, from the hour of their parting to the present, she has never heard from or of him. Robert Trenchard vanished utterly out of our knowledge. I cannot tell you what she suffered from hope deferred, from suspense, from the misery of ignorance and dread. All that is over now, of course, and she has outlived it; but it has left an indelible mark upon her, and also made her morbidly anxious and distrustful of the future for Jaqueline. It is two years since Trenchard's name has been uttered in our house. The last time was when she begged me to let it be unheard henceforth, and then she said: 'I am sure he is dead, and I am at rest in that security. He has not been faithless.' Lucius, the face on the plate is Trenchard's; how am I to tell her?"

"I do not know. Take time over it; tell her in your own time and your own way that you have certain knowledge of his death; but do not tell her more. Leave her to what peace she has acquired. I think you will find that she will be consoled still, as heretofore, by her belief that he was not faithless."

And so, I had been right; Mechtilde Janssen was a woman with a story.

I saw the plate on the following day, and the face was there, looking over Winthrop's shoulder; but, fortunately, not touching it, so that Hendrik was able to expunge it without injury to the figure of his sitter. The likeness was an admirable one. Winthrop's mother—whose name Hendrik never disclosed, although, I presume, he learned it—was much pleased, and sent him a message of warm thanks. A few months later Potter called on Hendrik—who had told me that he had communicated to his sister the fact that Trenchard's death was ascertained beyond a doubt—and gave him news of Winthrop. The poor fellow's health had begun to fail rapidly, apparently without cause, and he was not likely to see another Spring; but he was much less melancholy.

"He sticks to his imaginary murder still, with all the obstinacy of a lunatic," Potter said, in conclusion; "but there is one great improvement in his state—the face no longer looks over his shoulder, and he is convinced this is because some imaginary person, who cared for the visionary victim of his uncommitted crime, has been put out of sus-

pense. An extraordinary case of delusion, my dear Janssen. Nothing about the skull to account for it. A most extraordinary case!"

MATHILDE.

BY MRS. R. S. DE C. LAFFAN.

CHAPTER I.

Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with might.

THE air was warm with sunshine, and sweet with the lilting of birds; the sea was faintly purple, and so transparent that in its depths you could see the little round white pebbles, and watch them turn gently to and fro with the sway of the water that lapped against the lichen-covered rocks. These rocks, a little further from the sea margin, were carpeted with all low-creeping plants; here and there this tender herbage jewelled with stars of blue, and red, and gold, tiny blossoms among the greenery, each perfect in form, and vivid in colour, though so small. One pale pink flower, with long slender stems, had grown bolder than its fellows, and laid one of its cluster of rosy bells upon the gently stirring bosom of the water, as trustfully as a child might lay its head upon the mother's breast to be rocked to sleep.

The bay which washed this flower-pied shore was formed by a deep inlet of the Guernsey coast, and now lay sparkling in the sunshine, as though its surface were strewn with countless diamonds. Yet, beautiful as it was, it lacked something in the eyes of the girl who watched it. Anxious eyes were hers too just now, brown and soft as those of a spaniel, and arched by delicately traced brows of the same deep russet shade as the rippled hair that crowned the broad low forehead like a natural diadem; eyes that had a golden sparkle in their depths, and promised to be able to glint and laugh in merry moments happily enough. Her figure was tall and slender, yet womanly enough in the roundness of its curves, and her simple gown of light grey cotton fitted it faultlessly. Her hat hung upon her arm by its poppy-coloured ribbon; one hand, sun-browned yet slender, shaded her eyes from the glare above, that she might the better gaze across the shimmering waters of the bay. Behind her, away from the water-side, stretched a fine spread of Lenten lilies, nodding their yellow heads, and

making a sunshine of their own below, in rivalry of the glow overhead.

Out from this golden garden presently rushed a little maid, all red and breathless from chasing a butterfly. No fear that little Alice wanted to catch it, and pull the tiny feathers from its pretty wings. Oh, dear, no! Sister Mattie had taught her better things than that; but there could be no harm in running a race with the butterfly, just to see whether fluttering wings or flitting feet should have the best of it. Alice tried to be very careful not to tread upon the daffodils, and to keep on the grass; but, sad to relate, here and there a golden head lay low, and she had to go back and gather them up in her pinafore, wishing to make amends by taking them home and putting them in Grannie's yellow dish, by the window of the cottage that looked out upon the sea. She was sorry she had broken their straight green stems, and a very serious little face looked up at Sister Mattie from the depths of a big white sun-bonnet, and a troubled little voice began the story of the race with the butterfly.

But little Alice, the slain daffodils wrapped in her pinafore and hugged to her breast, chattered to Sister Mattie, and, for once, found an unheeding listener.

The little maid waxed wroth.

"You do be looking, looking over the sea, Mattie, and you don't be listening to Pet talking——"

"Pet is always talking."

"And Mattie is always looking over the sea."

Pet gazed seawards, too, as she spoke; then she looked at Mattie, gently pulled at the sleeve of the grey cotton gown, and asked a question on her own account.

"Does 'oo think, Mattie dear, the nice gentleman will come to-day in his ickle boat?"

"It is nothing to us, Pet, whether he comes or not," said Mattie, severely, gathering a poppy, without the least idea how well it matched the tint of her own cheek at the moment. "Now, come here, and we will tell about the tiny brown elf who lived——"

But Alice was not to be drifted from her vantage ground.

"What for, then, did you be looking for him, Sissy dear?"

In her baby creed, to look for a thing you did not want to find was a silly waste of time. It was nice to have Sissy sit down like that on the shallow

bank that was all moss and flowers; nice to be cuddled up and told about the brown elves. But was Sissy angry that she looked so red, and how could one listen even to the story of the elf, with a little dark speck out there on the bright water, coming nearer and nearer, and getting bigger and bigger every moment?

Yes, there it was—no longer a speck upon the water, but clearly defined enough—a little boat; its two sculls, like the fins of a great fish, cutting the water on either side.

Those sculls were skilfully wielded; indeed, the owner of this canoe had once in his life already been the envied winner of the "Diamonds," skimming the water in his tiny craft, as lightly and easily as a water-beetle, and with as little apparent effort, amid the cheers and plaudits of the lookers on. Now Major Clement Annesley had found a jewel, set in that garden of the sea, that island of flowers, called Guernsey; a jewel that seemed to him a prize more precious, more worth the winning than diamond sculls, or gems galore either of fame or gain.

He had been spending a month with his friend the officer commanding the regiment of the line, lying at The Lines barracks, and, truth to tell, now the month was at an end, he looked back with fond regret alike to sunny days and moonlit nights. Major Annesley had come to Guernsey to recruit. He had been on a shooting expedition to Catania, returning home to England only to sicken for a low fever, the result of malaria. The balance between life and death had, in fact, been rather nicely adjusted, and those about him had felt some uncertainty as to which scale would kick the beam.

Clement Annesley fought through the crisis of the fever, turned the corner, and came back to the world, rather thin and shadowy, not much like the man so well known for his athletic prowess, perhaps, but still with calm pulses and a clear head, two things that had failed him sadly since the weary night when he—what he called—"caved in," and lay moaning and half-unconscious on his bed, with a vague idea, at intervals, that certain troubles he had had to fight with were coming to an end, and that he was floating—floating away upon the waves of an eternal sea to where "beyond those voices there is peace."

After all he had to return from that dreamy border-land—not very gladly, yet with a certain pleasure and content in the

sights and sounds of everyday life that we all feel on recovering from sickness. Then his old friend, the commanding-officer of the regiment, quartered in Guernsey, wrote and begged of him to come and revel in Channel Island sunshine and fresh air, "lazy" round the bays in his boat, and generally please himself and get strong.

"This is the most healthy place in the world," wrote the Colonel, "and our fellows will be delighted to have you amongst them. The wife and I live in a charming little nest of a place, called Bertozerie, a house smothered in flowers, and with the jolliest smoking-room in the world. Hurry up, old fellow, and come along."

So Clement Annesley hurried up, and came along, and never did man gain health and strength so rapidly as he did in that island of flowers. He was in the humour to see the best of everything. He had left his troubles behind him for the moment. He was with the best and kindest of friends. The weather was simply glorious; at least, a month ahead of England, so that it was, as he said to the Colonel's charming wife, "like stepping into summer."

The Major, in his Canadian canoe, soon became a familiar enough figure to the simple inhabitants of the fishing village on the other side of the island from where town and barracks lay, for he skirted the bays and inlets and soon grew to know the coast off by heart. He had such bright, courteous ways with him, this man with the square-set shoulders, tawny locks, and grave-looking blue eyes; he won his way so easily into the citadel of any woman's heart, from old Grannie Lamotte, sitting in the sun beside her old man, Gregoire, mending nets, to the sweet, wee maid, Alice, who, from that pent-house, her sun-bonnet, made coquettish eyes at sight of him, and with one finger in her rosy mouth, and head on one side, courted a kiss as plainly as any daughter of Eve well could.

As to Mathilde, old Grannie's orphan grandchild, she said little enough, though she listened eagerly enough when others spoke of him. She kept silence when others spoke; but day by day the story that none around her suspected, was written upon the tablets of that heart, a record that time could not erase. Above her simple surroundings in the matter of intellectual culture, she was one of those women whose minds are unto them a kingdom, and having made the best of any

smallest opportunity given to her, Mathilde Lamotte found in the companionship of such a man as Clement Annesley the very atmosphere in which heart and intellect could alike expand. Nor is "companionship" too strong a word to use in describing the state of matters between these two. At first by accident, later by unacknowledged design, Clement met the girl with the golden-brown eyes in that flowery nook at the head of the deep inlet where we have seen her watching for his coming. Their talk was of all things under heaven. He brought her books, which she read with eyes and heart alike, partly for their own sake, partly for the giver's; read by the one slender candle allowed by Grannie, until the small, simple, maidenly chamber that looked sheer down the white cliff into the sea, grew to be a sort of fairy-land peopled with creatures of the imagination, peopled also with sweet and precious memories of the day that was passed; of tones and looks, and, now and again, the touch of a hand upon her shoulder, once of lips upon her hand.

She had been very happy, this guileless, dreaming girl: had been sad at times with a sense of her own unfitness to be the wife of a fine gentleman like Major Annesley, and then had blushed and sobbed for gladness to think that if he thought her fit, then must she be fit indeed; and what mattered the whole world, if it came to that?

But of late, just since the few last times of their meeting, a shadow had come over Mattie: a shadow to which she could hardly put a name, and yet which made itself felt. Something regretful in the passion-laden blue eyes: some new wistfulness in the smile with which he bade her farewell. She could not understand these things; but they reacted upon herself and made her feel night and day like one who listens to a plaintive strain of music and is saturated with its faint, sweet melody.

But we are keeping the little boat too long on its shoreward way, and Clement Annesley from the side of the woman he loves.

For it had come to that. This was no mere fancy, no mere admiration for a woman's beauty that now swayed his life; colouring every thought and every impulse. As the fragile craft touched the mossy margin of the bay, he sprang on shore, made fast the boat to a convenient stake, and then made his way, bare-headed—his little gay-coloured boating cap in his hand—to where Mattie and Alice waited

—the former, silent, pale, trembling; the latter, riotous and jubilant, as became her years and state.

"I be's welly glad 'oo does be come," she cried, rushing forward, while the poor daffodils fell to the ground. "Sissy has been looking for 'oo ever so. She couldn't hear Pet talking."

"Pet talks so much," he said, catching her up in his arms and tossing her aloft: a glow upon his sunburnt cheek, a joyous gleam in his blue eyes at the picture called up by her simple words.

Then he clasped Mattie's hand a moment, stinting himself of the joy of looking in her troubled face until that trouble should have passed.

But even then Mathilde seemed to be dumb, and her hands trembled so that she had to press them the one in the other. Have we not all gone through that strange phase of feeling—all felt that subtle sense of coming sorrow that no words can describe, and that yet is so real a thing? There was nothing that she knew of to make this coming of Clement Annesley's different to the many that had gone before, and yet the heart within her beat low, and the lips were pale that gave him such gentle greeting.

Pet loved to hear herself talk, and loved other people to listen to her, so she chattered away for a bit to these two as they strolled on side by side towards the shade of the woods which, a little further on, stretched down almost to the water's edge. Gradually, however, it dawned upon Pet that no one was paying the slightest attention to her. At this she posted; then caught sight of a radiant blue dragonfly skimming over the flowers with short, ecstatic flittings and stoppings, and lured by this attraction, the big sun-bonnet wandered away among the flags and grasses, until it became a mere white speck among the green, and then two tired little legs betook themselves home to "the cottage by the sea."

So these two—lovers in all but name—were left in the sweet-scented solitude of the summer woods, where the sunshine filtered down through a web of branches, and birds chirped softly as though the shadowy light sobered them. At first—on either side—words were few. In Clement's eyes was that sort of look that seems to say, "So I have found you!" a look than which there is none sweeter to a woman. As for Mattie, she always seemed to be wandering in fairy-

land, where her feet kept pace with those of Clement Annesley. As she listened to his voice, such glamour came over her, that all her fears and difficulties as to the difference of his position in the world and her own died away—or went somewhere out of sight—and there was nothing but content and joy, nothing but wonder and amaze at her own happiness, in and around her. Now and again she sighed but not with sorrow, rather with a joy that almost verged on pain.

"There is no climate in the world like that of this island of yours," said Major Annesley at last, pulling off his cap, and letting the sun-rays play hide and seek in the thick, short-cut clusters of his tawny locks, "it has made a new man of me. I shall never forget it——"

"Forget?" she said, raising her sweet eyes to his, her whole face paling, "are you—going away?"

"Well you know, I—— Oh! my darling, my darling, don't look like that!"

She was gathered in his arms; sobbing against his breast; his kisses rained upon her lips, her hair, her fair brow; all the pent-up passion and tenderness of the past month were lavished on her now, in this the hour of her full and sweet content. Whatever the future might hold of loss or sorrow, she had just this one hour of fullness and of joy. It was her own, no one could take it from her, no one could rob her of its sweet memory in the future.

In her heart she had known that he loved her; had said so over and over again to herself in the quiet watches of the night, when the water beneath her window sobbing against the rocks, and seemed like the happy sighing of her own breast.

Then she had dreamed. Now she felt; wondering, that she of all the world should be so blest; realising all her own unfitnesses to be Major Annesley's wife, yet not altogether abashed, since he had chosen her and crowned her with the rose-crown of his love.

"You love me, my darling?" he murmured, bending closely over her to watch the sweet face change and glow; "I knew you did—I knew you did."

Her hat lay upon the mossy floor of the wood; her bared head lay back against her lover's breast; her eyes closed as his lips touched hers and lingered there. She was living her little day, like some bright insect that floats and dances in the sunshine, taking no thought for anything save the perfect content of the moment.

But love is not always eloquent, and Mathilde found but scant words to say to this fond wooer who had wiled her head away. To her the quiet wood seemed a temple, the twittering birds, love choristers, singing for joy that this glorious summer of delight was shining over earth and sky, making the whole world beautiful.

"Tell me," said Clement, holding her back from him the better to look into her tell-tale eyes, and speaking with all the tender tyranny love teaches a man so quickly, "does it make you happy to know how dear you are to me?"

"Ah!" she said, "you know: you know more than I can tell you; but there are some things I must say."

There was a little, tender trouble in her voice, a tiny pucker between the finely pencilled brows.

"Well?" he said, letting her move away from him, and watching her, not without some trouble on his own part as it seemed, as she stood there before him tall and fair as a lily, and with something of the lily's tint beginning to show upon her cheek, robbing the roses. She drew a deep breath, gathering up her courage, and then spoke:

"You say you knew I loved you—you know it now better than ever I am sure, and how—happy—I am; but, don't want you to think that I don't know—don't realise—don't feel in my very heart of hearts, how many things there are there must be—which make me hardly fit, even loving you as I do, to be your wife. Those belonging to you will feel all this more than you do—because you—love me" (this with a faint smile, and a charming gesture of the hands, as who should say, "We will put you out of court; you are prejudiced in favour of the prisoner at the bar, and, therefore, you cannot see things as others will"); "and, what I want to say to you is this, you must tell them. I will try so hard to grow more what I ought to be in every way, you can tell them about all the books you have lent me, and how I have read them—I almost know the 'Keats' you gave me off by heart—indeed I do——"

It is hard for Mattie to go on; for Clement has turned away from her. He is staring on to where the glimmer of the sea shows bright between the veil of the trees; his lips are set hard together, and show palely under the heavy sweeping moustache.

These signs of trouble she cannot see

she only knows that he has turned away from her, that she must have said something to vex him sorely, though she cannot tell what. She takes a timid step or two, comes up beside him, and lays her hand upon his arm.

"Have I made you angry?" she says, trembling, "tell me, if I have?"

Then he turns and faces her, and she staggers back as though he had struck her a cruel blow.

CHAPTER II.

And this is why I sojourn here

Alone, and palely loitering;

Though the sedge is withered from the lake,

And no birds sing.

CLEMENT did not let the girl with the wide, frightened eyes stray far or long. He caught and held her again quickly enough; and as he watched her the hardness died out of his face, and a brightness, as of tears, gathered in the eyes that met hers.

Woman-like, Mattie, at sight of this, forgot her fears—forgot all save that the man she loved was there before her, and in sorrow.

"What is it?" she said, clinging to him.

"What is it troubles you so—my—love?"

The exaltation of the moment seemed to give her strength to cast aside her natural timidity—to speak as if she had long held the right to be his help and comfort in whatsoever trials might beset him.

"Tell me," she pleaded, turning and touching with her lips the hand that rested on her shoulder with such a heavy, tremulous pressure; "Tell me, and let me share it."

Though she knew it not, Mathilde was in truth about to share, even to the uttermost, that heavy burden that pressed so sorely on her lover's life. Though she knew it not, she was asking at his hands a gift of bitterness—asking him to put to her lips the chalice of a bitter pain.

"Yes," he said at last, still holding her, but looking far away above her bowed head as if at something he alone could see, "I will speak now, and you shall listen; you shall know the trouble that weighs down my heart and life; you shall hear of the chain that binds me close and fast in a hateful bondage. Mattie, my dear one, I did not mean to let things come to this; I would have prevented it if I could, for your dear sake. I have been weak, I know; I have let myself drift, have let you drift along with me, believing me—free."

That last word cost in the saying, and

he felt her shiver in his arms. He drew a long breath, as a man naturally does after any great effort; then, as Mattie was still silent, he went on:

"I am not the only man who has made shipwreck of himself, and then lost heart and hope. I went mad for a woman's beauty, and when I had got it I found that I had got nothing else: no home—save in name—no companionship, no interest in my life or thoughts, no sympathy, no tenderness. We drifted further and further apart, my wife and I; and then, when I sickened for the fever that brought me so near to death, she left me. The doctors said the thing was not catching, but—so she reasoned—it might be. I was left to the care of strangers, for I have neither mother nor sister living; there was no one I had any claim upon. I got through as I could; but I felt that I could not take up the old life of jarring and discord again. I wrote to my wife, and told her so. I am rich, and could provide for her well. I had no wish to speak ill of her; beyond her perfect heartlessness there was, indeed, none to speak; and she said that she should be happier living with her mother than with me. The mother—a frivolous, shallow-hearted woman, fond of dress and show—was glad of the additional income; glad, as she said, to get her daughter back, and to feel that she would not have her will crossed in every little thing—as it had been by me. This settled, resolutely enough, yet not without pain either—for a man cannot break up his home without cruel comment from the world, and a certain feeling of humiliation—I came here. Need I go on with the story of the days, my darling?" he continued, rocking her softly to and fro in his arms as if she had been a child. "I have been very cruel to you, Mattie."

If she had spoken out hotly; if she had been full of indignant feeling; if she had reproached him, he could have borne it better. But a woman does not love very deeply if she can put herself, her own feelings or reputation, or possible suffering, in the first place, where the man she loves is concerned. And so it came about that as Mathilde Lamotte listened to the story of Clement's broken life and desolate home, all her thought was for his trial, his sorrow, his pain; and, as yet, the effect upon her own life and position which that story must have, had hardly been brought home to her at all. He was sad, he was sorry, and she could do so little; that was all she realized at present.

The time would come when she would see and feel the other side of things, when she would know what she herself had lost, of what fate had defrauded her: the time when she would suffer keenly and continuously for herself.

Now she suffered only for him. As he went on heaping reproaches upon his own head for the sorrow he had brought upon her, she rallied all her powers, struggling to cast aside the lethargy that had seemed to wrap her round like some mist that made all things shadowy and unreal.

"Do not be so sorry," she said, lifting herself from his arms, and looking gravely up into his troubled face; "I am not sorry: you could not help loving me, nor I you. When you are far away it will comfort you to think that I care so much. You can send me books, can you not? and perhaps write to me sometimes to tell me what to notice most in them."

Seeing, however, that not much comfort dawned in his hopeless, haggard face, she made a grand effort at complete self-forgetfulness, at a piteous sort of cheerfulness, just to help him on to be less sad.

"After all, it mightn't have been much of a success, dear; these unequal marriages seldom are, they say, and perhaps things are better—as they are——!"

She had begun this astounding speech with a strange, fitful little smile that had in it more pathos than many tears. She ended it with quivering lips, and a voice that broke and faltered pitifully.

"Don't talk like that," he said, "it hurts me," and the growing passion of his voice made her heart beat thick and heavily; "do not dare to say you are not my equal—you are the truest, purest, best——"

"Having been so much more educated than most girls of my station of course makes a difference; makes us less unequal, I mean," she put in hurriedly, clinging with a woman's unerring instinct to the commonplace—fearing she knew not what "but still——"

What gentle thoughts Mattie's words were meant to convey may never be known, since their utterance was cut short and stifled; for, with a sound, half sob, half cry, Clement Annesley caught her to him, holding her fiercely and defiantly to his heart. She could feel the strong, swift beating of his heart against her own, as he seemed to claim her as his own against life and fate, and all the world.

"Do you think," he said, hoarsely, "that I can hold you here like this—and then—let you go? Mathilde—Mathilde! Can you find it in your gentle heart to send me from you—to bid me go away alone into a world that will be a desert without you? Oh, my love! if you love me as you say you do, you cannot cast me from you, you cannot go on your way and leave me to become a worse thing than I was before I knew you! I will love you as never wife was loved yet. I will hold you more precious than any woman was ever held by man. Only come to me—only give yourself to me for love's own sweet sake—only let my arms keep you close and fast where no harm shall touch you——"

Again he wished that she would but speak, that she would lift that dear ruffled head from off the shelter of his breast—that she would be sad, sorry, angry, anything but silent!

He peered down into her hidden face, laid his hand upon the brown ripples of her hair, spoke with less passion and revolt, with deeper tenderness, with fonder pleading.

She was to be spared nothing, this lonely child of the island shore—this simple, passionate soul that had grown up, like a woodland flower in the shelter of her cottage home. The tender pleading of the man she loves is harder for a woman than his tyranny and wilfulness. "I shall be lonely" is a less piercing thought than "He will be desolate."

"This island of yours, my dearest, is not all the world. There are other lands, far distant ones, where none would ever ask, or seek to know our story—where people would take us just as we are, for ourselves alone, and never care to pry into what had gone before. Do you think my love, my reverence would fail you? You do not know how deep your hold upon my heart lies. I have never seen a woman who could so fill my life. Trust me, Mathilde; trust me, my darling, and do not send me from your side to-day a desperate, hopeless man!"

Still silence. But now he could see the face that lay back wearily against his shoulder. He could see the white quivering lips, the closed eyelids, from beneath which the great bright tears gathered and fell.

If only she would take it in any way but that!

Had his passionate heedless words broken her heart, that she should lie thus like a broken lily in his arms—she so bright, so

winsome; she whose laughter had rivalled the singing of the birds for sweetness! What had he done?

He leaned above her in a frenzy of trouble, kissing the closed lids and the trembling mouth.

"My love—my love!" he said, sobbing like a woman.

If he had sinned, did he not suffer?

Grannie sat out in the sunshine. Her old man had tired of net-mending, and had fallen asleep in his chair. His hat had dropped forward over his face; his hands were folded each in the other upon his breast. He snored gently and peacefully, and altogether made a restful figure in the pretty landscape. For the sun was beginning to dip westward; his rays seemed to kiss the sea and the soft, green turf languorously; they caught the scarlet gleam of the geraniums in the cottage window, and made a glory of them; shone on the red sail of a fishing-craft that skimmed slowly along the rippling water, and turned it into a thing of marvellous beauty; finally, they shone most lovingly on little Alice, fast asleep on Grannie's lap, and kissed the gold of her tossed, fair locks to threads of light. With a stretching out of dimpled hands and the yawn of a rosebud mouth, Pet awoke at last, and looked upon the sun-bright world with sleepy eyes blue as speedwells newly blown.

"Where does Mattie be?" she said, nearly overturning Grannie, chair and all, by the energy with which she sat up straight, the better to stare hard in the direction of the woods. Then, as no one answered her question, she made another observation, addressed to any one whom it might concern. "Wants mine tea."

"Ay, ay," said the old man, waking with a jerk, and cutting a snore in two; "we all want our tea; but where's our pretty maid to get it for us, little one?"

Then the old man gave a mighty yawn, scratched his head, and glanced this way and that in search of the "pretty maid" he loved.

All in a moment Pet was off like a lapping, for there, just at the turn of the low, sloping hill that looked like so much green velvet in the sloping sunlight, came into view the tall, slim figure they all knew so well; the "pretty maid" was in sight already, and tea would follow as a matter of course.

It was wonderful how fast Pet's little sturdy legs covered the ground; how

quickly she reached the haven of her desires and was clinging to Mathilde's gown, laughing for joy to get "Sissy" back once more.

Mattie caught up the child, and, with the little arms laced close about her neck, set off towards the cottage.

"She is too heavy to be carried; put her down—the saucy one!" cried Grannie at this, wavering about as she took a step or two to meet the pair. Grannie had been growing very frail of late, and wavered a good deal when she walked if she had not Mattie's arm to lean on.

She could not hear what Mattie was saying as she crushed little Alice in her arms, and whispered in the rosy ear that peeped from the clusters of golden locks: "You would not like to look for Sissy all day long, and never find her, Pet?"

And Pet said, "No, no, no!" and hugged the pretty maid the tighter, never noting that the cheek she kissed was paler than a white rose petal, or that the sweet, serious eyes that looked at her had deep, dark shadows under them, the result of many tears. The poor are not keenly observant; so now Mattie's lagging, weary steps, the hopeless sadness of her face, the shiver that now and again shook her from head to foot, as she served out the tea, and cut the bread-and-butter, that had to be sprinkled ever so lightly with sugar to satisfy Pet, all passed unnoticed. In some natures the power of a noble self-discipline seems to be inherent, and of these, Mathilde was one. Upon her lips still burned in memory the sweet, passionate kisses that had thrilled her through and through as she stood encircled by her lover's arm in the mellowed sunshine of the woods. His words, his looks, his sorrow, and his tenderness, were as real and present to her now as when eye and ear and heart had seemed filled to overflowing with an exquisite content. But her work lay before her to be done, and she did it.

I remember once a poor bereaved mother—bereaved indeed, since she had lost by dire disease all her sweet little ones—"at one fell swoop"—telling me the story of her griefs, and I, almost speechless myself for sympathy, cried out that I could not tell how she had lived through that terrible time, how she had faced the silence, where once had been the sound of little feet; the desolation, where once had been the touch of baby hands; and she answered me

in her simplicity and truth: "There was always something to be done, you see, my lady, or I couldn't have bided——"

This woman was only a soldier's wife—rough, uncouth, uneducated; but all the truest philosophy of resignation seemed to me to be wrapped in that pithy saying of hers: "There is always something to be done;" and, therefore, it is that none of us can afford to sit idle, with drooping hands and tear-blind eyes, bemoaning ourselves in helpless sorrow.

Mathilde found plenty to do as that fated summer grew to fulness, and then ripened to autumn. Sorrow came in sad, unlooked-for fashion to the cottage-home, and Grannie, frail enough before, sickened, faded, died, and, as the first leaves fell, was laid to rest in the pretty churchyard that aloped to the sea, where the waves sang softly to the sleepers evermore. How the girl mourned for the joy and the sweetness that had died out of her life; what tears she shed; what prayers she prayed; how she wandered sometimes through the woods and so out on to the shore, gazing at the bright expanse of waters where no little boat ever came into sight, a dear little speck upon the far-off ripples; of all these things, and more, who shall tell? It is an old story, that of how a man or woman has to set to work to take up life as it lies to his or her hand, and live up to whatever calls it makes upon the heart and hands, no matter how fate has blotted out from it the sweetness and the light, the passion and the joy, that once shone on every step of the way, making it all so beautiful. Mattie had cruel troubles to face, cruel sorrows to live down, and she faced the one, and lived down the other.

The years do not turn laggard for any of us, because they are sorrow-laden. Nature is pitiless. She will not spare us the sight of her wealth of flowers in summer, her beautiful fields of grain in autumn, her winter garniture of scarlet berries bright with hoar-frost, or her tender violets and dancing daffodils in spring. No matter what our desolation may be, she thrusts her fair spring posies in our pale faces. "Are they not sweet?" she says, "these new-born treasures of mine, are they not beautiful?"

It was so with Mathilde Lamotte. The years passed on, each with its burden of flowers, its storm and shine, each bringing its work, its little troubles, and its little pleasures, and she heard no word of Clement

Annesley. The music of his name had died out of her life, leaving but a plaintive echo behind it.

Five times the fields about the fisher-cottage had grown bright with a thousand blades of springing corn, five times had mellowed to the reaper's sickle; five times the bare brown branches of the trees had shown dark against the sky, betraying the cushat's nest, and now spring is once more touching the island world to beauty, once more giving her sweet gifts of flowers to man; once more making sweet music in the thrush's speckled breast. Pet has grown a great girl—sun-bonnets are a thing of the past. She is tall and straight as a reed, and her golden locks are twisted into a great bright knot, a marvel of neatness. She is also what the islanders call "bright at learning," and a credit to her sister Mattie, who has trained her so well, that she is able to help in the Dame's School which the increasing proportions of the fishing village have rendered a necessity and a success. Pet takes the tiniest of the children in what is called an "alphabet class," and the young teacher's dignity is a sight to see. Mathilde Lamotte is the headmistress of this school, and turns out such grand scholars that all the fisher-folk wonder. She is not much changed, this sweet Mattie of ours, by the passing of the years, at all events not at all for the worse. She is not quite so slender as when, five years ago, she stood shading her eyes with her hand to watch for Clement Annesley's canoe. She is graver, too, and has that wonderful sweetness of look and voice which I think is to be found only in those who live much among young children.

Look at her as she gravely lectures a defaulter, a little maid who recalls Alice of the sun-bonnet in the days that are past. What a gentle, firm way she has with these young creatures, how dearly they love her! To them the cruellest pain of wrong-doing is that it grieves that dear mistress of theirs.

The culprit is dismissed to her place in class. Mathilde takes her stand in the centre of the large room that does duty as a school-room. She leads the evening prayer that closes each day's toil; and then, the sound of many little voices singing the sweet, old-fashioned Evening Hymn floats out across the sea.

Outside a man is listening. He stands there bare-headed, as though the soft blue sky were a cathedral dome, the straight boles of the trees the pillars of an aisle.

He is changed, this tender-hearted, faulty man, whose story we have been telling—changed and aged by the passing of the years more than is the woman he has thus sought, and thus found.

The last Amen has died away. With bounds, and shout, and ripple of happy laughter, the crowd of little ones rush out into the sunlight, treading on each other's heels, all staring as they pass at the tall, grave-eyed stranger, who takes no heed of them, but watches the arched door-way of the school intently.

Presently, stepping very quietly, a book or two in her hands, an air of sober business-like thoughtfulness all about her, the head-mistress following her flock comes through the arched doorway, to find herself face to face with—Clement Annesley.

"Mattie!"

At the sound of the old well-remembered voice, she starts and the books fall to the ground.

"You here?" she says, and their hands meet.

Not to part easily either, for he keeps one firmly in his hold, and so linked, they walk together to the cottage that looks upon the sea, and where the windows are still full of geraniums which might well be the same that blossomed there five years ago.

Alice has gone to a neighbour's. There is no one in the quiet parlour save a wise-looking cat licking her fur on the hearthrug. As to old Grandad Lamotte, he is sitting out in the little garden at the side of the house. He has his red handkerchief over his head, and is fast asleep; so he counts for nothing. These two, Mattie and the man who was once her lover, are alone.

Was once? Nay, still is, for he is kissing the busy hands that are idle just for once and lie quietly enough in his; his eyes grow to the dear face that he has longed to see so often in the lonely, empty years—

"Mattie—my darling—I am come to ask you to be—my wife. I am a free man now; you will not say me nay, will you, my dearest one?"

Mattie does not speak.

A tear trickles down her cheek. She has loved this man once with all the passion of an intense nature. The sight of his face, the sound of his voice stirs and troubles her.

A dusky crimson floods his cheek—mounts to his brow.

"Mattie—have you forgiven me?"

"Yes; I forgave you long since. There was no bitterness in my heart towards you

then; there is none now. I am glad that we should meet—glad to tell you this—"

"And is that all?" His voice breaks and falters, the red colour dies from his cheeks.

She is kind and gentle; her grave, sweet eyes meet his regretfully and tenderly; but she is passionless as the grey dawn of a winter's morning. He would not dare to clasp her in his arms, to press his own to the lips that speak so calmly and so kindly—he would not dare.

"I—loved you so," he stammers; "I could not bear to—let you go—"

"I wish that you had loved me just a little more—just enough to hold you back from saying—what you did."

"You said you had forgiven me. Oh, Mattie! you are cruel to me—you would break my heart."

"I have forgiven you. I am as sorry to feel as I do now as you can be for me; but it is no good. I could never forget. It is one of those things that, once said, is always there—the memory, I mean—it—kills love—love, as I hold it. Nay, do not grieve so; I cannot bear to see you weep! Do you think a woman can love as I loved you and forget? But the rest is beyond my own will. It is not that I will not, it is that I cannot, undo the work of the past. I have suffered cruelly. After you went away bitter sorrow came to us. Some one had seen our happy meetings. Oh, how happy they were—weren't they, dear? And I was spoken evil of. Nay, do not start and mutter like that; I lived it all down. I had friends who stood by me. I thought it would have killed me; but it didn't, you see. Still, there was Grannie—Grannie, who had given me a home since mother died—Grannie, who was so proud of her good name—it broke her heart. She was frail and ailing; she could not stand against it; she died in the autumn of that year; she went mourning all the time. Do you not see that I could not forget, that I could not be happy? Oh, my dear! be comforted—for, indeed—indeed, I know that I am right. I am happy in my work here. I have had no lover in the past, nor shall in the future. I gave all I had to give to you. Now, it is no man's—I mean, my heart of heart. You have seen my little ones; they love me, and I am happy with them round me. I shall never know a mother's love myself, you see, and they stand in the stead of all that to me. I could not bear

to give up this work of mine ; all my heart is in it :

My work is mine, and, heresy or not, if my hand slackened I should rob Heaven . . .
Leaving a blank, instead of violins . . .

I found those lines in one of the books you gave me in that blessed time that now lies dead——"

"Killed by my own hand!"

"Yes. And now, good-bye, dear ; do not stay ; it hurts us both too much, this looking in the face of a dead past which can know no resurrection. Go, and may Heaven be with you !"

He took her gently in his arms, and kissed her on the lips and on the brow—she him. Then he went—silently, as she would have him.

With streaming eyes she watched him down the road, and at the turn, as he looked back, she raised her hand a moment heavenward.

That was the end of Mathilde's love story.

IN WOLF'S CLOTHING.

By H. M. PAULL.

CHAPTER I.

In the early part of the summer of 1870 I happened to be in South Devonshire. My sister Bertha had been unwell for some time, and the doctors had ordered her a complete change.

We agreed that Devonshire was the county which called for exploration on our part. We had never visited it, and it seemed a good opportunity to do so.

We both paint, and it is notorious that Devonshire is a paradise for artists.

We established ourselves at the seaside, and spent a very pleasant fortnight, making excursions inland, as opportunity served, for the purpose of sketching.

I began a somewhat important picture ; but its progress was interrupted by our discovery that Bertha's health, so far from improving, was certainly deteriorating. She grew languid and disinclined to move from the beach. She slept badly, and altogether it became clear that the south coast of Devonshire was not favourable to her health.

Without a day's delay we took train inland, finally pitching our tent, metaphorically, on the borders of Dartmoor. It was not entirely an unknown country to us ; for we had made one or two excursions as far as the moor during the preceding fortnight, and had been greatly charmed

with the scenery. Hence, far from regretting our move, in the course of a few days we became thoroughly reconciled to it.

We had taken up our head-quarters at an outlying farm-house to which we had been recommended by the proprietor of the hotel in the village. The hotel was full, so the landlord had no motive in misleading us.

We found Mr. Russell, the farmer, an excellent specimen of the species, and although the cookery of his household was not all that could be desired, the food was plentiful and wholesome.

He kept a very neat little trap, of which he only made use once a week when driving to the village ; at other times it was at our disposal, and we made frequent excursions in the surrounding neighbourhood under the guidance of a boy, who was promoted for the occasion to the post of coachman. Though more accustomed to driving a cart than a gig, he knew the horse, and so managed very well.

We found it very pleasant to start soon after breakfast, and, taking our painting apparatus with us, together with some lunch, fix on a favourite spot, and the paint until late in the afternoon. After which we would drive back to the nearest approach to dinner which we could obtain.

Undeterred by my failure to finish my former picture, I started another important one, from a view of Hay Tor. I had nearly finished it. One day more and it would be completed.

We had arranged that on a certain Tuesday we would take our last drive in that direction, in order that I might finish my painting. After that, we would see fresh fields to conquer.

Unfortunately, when Tuesday morning came, my sister Bertha found herself far from well. She confessed that she had had a bad night, and felt utterly disinclined to leave the house.

I was very much annoyed, both on her account and my own, for there had been signs of breaking weather, and Mr. Russell informed us that there was no doubt that in the course of another day or so we should have a thorough change.

"You must not think of staying in on my account," said Bertha, decidedly. "I shall be perfectly comfortable here ; all I want is a little rest. You had better have your trip, and finish your picture, by all means."

I protested that I did not like to leave her alone, as she was not feeling so well

usual. But she insisted that it was nothing more than a temporary indisposition, and that my staying at home would annoy her very considerably.

I at last allowed myself to be persuaded, and placed Bertha in the charge of Mrs. Russell, a good, motherly woman, who was kindness itself.

By the time we had fully discussed the subject, the hour at which we usually started had passed. I knew that I had a good day's work before me, so I made all the haste I could, and hurried up the boy, whilst Mrs. Russell prepared me some lunch.

At eleven o'clock I set off. I promised Bertha to be back as early as possible, and told her not to feel uneasy in case I should be an hour or two late.

"Be sure you don't come back until you wish," she said, "I shall be quite easy about you; and as this is probably the last day you will be able to get, you had better take full advantage of it."

I made the boy drive as rapidly as possible, in order to lose no time. The pony was fresh, and we went along at a very good pace across the moor. The road was good, but very dusty. I could have welcomed a shower of rain. There was every sign in the heavens that it would not be many hours before we should have one.

The road crossed the moor, making a slight ascent. It then ran through a copse of underwood for about half a mile, at the termination of which it again entered the open country.

Nothing happened until we reached the copse. So anxious was I to lose no time, that I managed to set my palette as we drove along.

The sun was quite high now, and I feared that the light would not be the same as on previous occasions, so I once again urged the boy to drive as fast as he could. He obeyed me, and whipped the pony up.

In a few minutes, however, I warned him that we were making too much haste. The pace did not seem really to be very tremendous; but there was an ominous swaying of the vehicle, which seemed to imply that something was wrong. I looked over the side of the trap, and saw that one wheel was swerving in a most dangerous fashion.

"Pull up!" I shouted. "We shall be over in a minute!"

The boy checked the pony at once, seeming quite as frightened as I was.

I jumped down, and saw what the mischief was.

The cap of the axletree had got loose, and come off. The wheel was gradually working its way off the axle; in another minute it would have entirely slipped, and we should have had a nasty spill.

CHAPTER II.

"WHAT are we to do now?" I said to the boy, enquiringly.

John was looking on most ruefully. He had no suggestion to make; he stood helplessly staring at the loosened wheel, scratching his head.

"We can't go on like this, you know," I said.

"No, sure enough we can't," was John's reply.

"Well, what are we to do?" I demanded.

"Don't know, sir," was the comforting response.

It was evident that in this juncture I should have to rely on my own resources. We were now some seven miles from home, and fully two miles from the spot at which I had intended to resume my painting. These two miles were all more or less uphill, and very bad road.

I thought, however, that I might be able to carry my canvas and easel there without any very great difficulty.

I had already pulled my apparatus from the trap, when it suddenly occurred to me that, even supposing I were to succeed in getting there in time to enable me to do any work worth considering, there was the important question how to return to be taken into account.

The trap was evidently useless. Even presuming I were to ride the pony back, we should have to leave the trap and all my materials behind; and, in the event of a storm coming on in the night, they would suffer considerable injury.

I soon saw that it was out of the question that I should finish my painting that day, at any rate, and consequently devoted myself to the solution of the problem of how to get home again as soon as possible. It was impossible to drive back, that was clear. We drew the pony along a few yards, to see if it were at all probable that we could proceed, without an accident, by holding up the weak side of the trap.

No; to reach home in that fashion would be a matter of many hours.

I came to the conclusion, at length, that the best thing to be done was for me to walk home, as rapidly as possible, and get

Mr. Russell to send out help. John, meanwhile, was to follow on as fast as he could, having due regard to the state of the trap.

Seeing that I was resolved to leave him alone, although much against his will, John strongly advised me not to return by the road, but to take a short cut through the wood and across the coombe. He told me that it saved at least a third of the distance, and that there was a very good path directly you crossed the ridge.

I was somewhat loth to try this new road, for the first time, in such circumstances; but, bearing in mind that it meant getting home at least an hour sooner, I decided to make the attempt.

Putting some sandwiches in my pocket, and making John once more explain the route, I left the road and began striding down towards the valley which separated the road from the coombe. I found a stream at the foot of the valley, which John had omitted to mention. There was no bridge; but, fortunately, the recent hot weather had made it fordable. I tried to get across by jumping from stone to stone, but missed my footing once, wetting myself nearly up to my knees.

This was a wretched nuisance, as it is far from agreeable to walk in wet boots. There was no help for it, however; so I pushed forward, up through the heather and gorse, towards the stony ridge.

It was hot and exhausting work; I almost regretted I had not stuck to the road, notwithstanding John's exhortation. There was scarcely the semblance of a path, and thorns greatly impeded walking.

By good luck, I struck on a sheep track when about half-way up, and along this I managed to make my way more rapidly, although I found my wet boots and the clinging of my trousers a great annoyance.

On reaching the top of the coombe, I looked in vain for the path which John had mentioned.

There were innumerable tracks down the slopes; but neither of them of sufficient importance to warrant my taking it in preference to the others.

After spending nearly half an hour in valueless experiments, I resolved that the only thing to be done was to choose one, and hope it would prove to be the right one.

Going down hill was rather worse than climbing up. I began to be very thirsty. It was now about lunch time; but I hesitated to stop and eat my sandwiches, as I

had nothing to drink. Possibly, at the foot of the hill, I thought I might come across a stream.

I pushed on with renewed zeal, though my feet were being driven into my boots in the most painful manner.

There was no stream at the bottom of the valley; but there certainly was a sort of path, which seemed to lead into the wood on the opposite side. Although I did not know the country, I believed I knew the general direction in which home lay, and, as this path seemed to lead towards it, I unhesitatingly followed it.

In a few minutes I found myself in a thick undergrowth. The path, which seemed so clear when I entered it, grew rapidly and most aggravatingly narrower and narrower, until, at the end of a quarter of a mile, it was the merest track. In another couple of hundred yards it had disappeared.

I was obliged to confess to myself that I was utterly lost.

I felt excessively uncomfortable. I had heard of people being lost and belated on Dartmoor, and, of course, at this instant all the stories I had listened to took this opportunity of recurring most unpleasantly to my memory.

It seemed in the highest degree improbable that I could meet a living soul—no one, at any rate, could be in this region of their own free will. Clearly, the first thing to be done was to get out of it. Fortunately it was still early in the day, so that I had plenty of time before me.

Near at hand there was a fairly high tree, and I speedily made for it, as from that elevation I might hope to get a view of my whereabouts. But my climbing powers had sadly degenerated. I managed to swarm up the trunk, after several attempts; but found myself unable to climb high enough to obtain a view beyond the copse.

This was exasperating. I felt so exhausted on reaching the ground again, that I concluded that the wisest thing to do would be to have a bit of lunch. True, there was nothing to drink; but I must make the best of it.

I sat down at the foot of the tree which had so defied my efforts, pulled out my provender, and began to munch my dry and uninviting meal.

My mouth was still full, when I heard the sound of footsteps behind me.

I jumped to my feet. For a moment I was thoroughly frightened. The stories

I had heard of wild cattle on Dartmoor, flashed upon me. A second's reflection however, showed me how improbable it was that cattle should be in the middle of a thick copse.

But, if not cattle, what could it be?

I peered through the undergrowth, but could see nothing.

The footsteps came nearer and nearer. Evidently some one, or something, was approaching the spot where I stood.

My heart now leapt for joy. This was luck better than I could possibly have anticipated. Unless it should happen to be some tourist as lost as myself, there was now every probability that my troubles would soon be over.

As soon as I could speak, I gave a shout.

The footsteps suddenly ceased.

I again called out: "Who's there?"

Still no reply.

This was mysterious, certainly, and by no means reassuring.

After the lapse of a few moments, however, I heard the quick cracking of branches, and then, suddenly—before I could have expected it—a man leapt from the bushes into the little space in which I stood.

CHAPTER III.

I LOOKED at him in astonishment, and, I must confess, horror.

He was dressed in a most peculiar costume. He wore no hat; his hair was cropped very close; his hands were torn by the bushes, and his peculiar clothes had suffered in the same way, only to a still greater extent.

In a moment the truth flashed across my mind—I was face to face with an escaped convict! The dress and broad arrows were conclusive evidence.

We looked at each other in silence for a moment or two.

Then the convict spoke in a harsh, rough tone, which, however, might not have been intentionally rough, for he was apparently famished.

"Give me that sandwich," he said.

I handed the small packet to him. It was no deprivation to me to part with it. If that were all he wanted he was assuredly most welcome.

The man devoured the food in silence. I watched him keenly, trying meanwhile to calm myself sufficiently to think what I had better do next.

He was not a tall man; in fact, not taller than myself; but he was much bigger. His hands were large and sinewy; his neck was short and bull-like, denoting great physical strength. He carried in his hand a short iron bar, of which, doubtless, he had made use in effecting his escape. It was a nasty-looking weapon. I did not like the appearance of it at all.

Secretly I wished I had a revolver; but I had nothing about me more deadly than my penknife.

The man did not make so much difficulty about the sandwiches as I had done.

Presently, he demanded some drink; but I assured him, that, to my regret, I had no flask about me.

When he had finished the sandwiches he threw himself down at the foot of the tree, remarking, partly to himself and partly to me, that he was dead tired.

I felt in a most embarrassing situation.

I would, willingly, have left the fellow to himself; but I had not the slightest idea in what direction to escape, even if escape were possible.

So far, the man had shown no disposition to interfere with my movements; but that may have been because he knew there was no necessity for him to do so.

I hoped that he was going to fall asleep; but my hopes were disappointed. He did not even shut his eyes.

After about ten minutes' rest he seemed to be slightly recovered.

Turning to me, he said: "What are you doin' here, guv'nor?"

I told him, simply, that I had lost my way, my trap having broken down. I thought it just as well to conciliate him, so treated him as I should have treated any tourist whom I had met by accident.

I informed him that I was lodging at Farmer Russell's, and asked him if he could direct me towards it, promising him a considerable reward if he could do so.

He gave a short laugh, and seemed somewhat assured at my way of putting the case to him.

"Why, bless your heart, sir," he said, in a not unpleasant tone, "I've never been 'ere before in my life. I'm as lost as you are—and more so. I come from London." "Not immediately," I said, with a smile, to put things on as pleasant a footing as I was able.

"Well, no," he said, with a frown crossing his countenance. "You can guess where I come from, I suppose?"

"There's no need to mention the place,"

I said, not wishing to make him feel more uncomfortable than necessary.

"No, there ain't," he assented; "but I've bid it good-bye, I hope, for good, though it's forty to one if I can get clear away. But they'll have some trouble before they take me again, that I can promise them."

I was, certainly, in a strange situation; in the heart of a wood, talking in a confidential way to an escaped convict.

Doubtless, it was my duty as a citizen to defend the majesty of the law; to recapture this escaped convict; and to take him to a place where he could be securely kept, prior to his re-incarceration.

But some duties are extremely difficult of performance, and a single glance at my convict friend showed me that on this occasion I should be lucky if he allowed me my independence of action, on condition that I respected his.

In fact, the more I reflected the more awkward my position appeared. I was entirely in this man's power. If it came to a struggle he could do just what he liked with me.

There was absolutely nothing for me to do, but to make the best of it; to try to avoid any thing calculated to aggravate him, and to hope that he would not too far abuse his advantage.

"It is unpleasant," I said, in as cheerful a tone as I could assume, "that you are a stranger on Dartmoor. We seem to be in the same box. Have you no idea of the direction in which any town lies?"

"Never a bit," he replied. "I come here quite by chance. I've had to change my way a dozen times. You see, I can't ask my way very well," he said, grimly, "it's too dangerous; so I've got to find it out for myself."

"Yes," I remarked, "that is one of the disadvantages of being in your position. Now, I have, naturally, been wishing that I could meet some one of whom I could ask the way. What are we to do now? It is imperative that I should get home as early as possible."

"Well, I tell you what I'm going to do," he said, listlessly. "I'm going to lay here for half an hour. I've been on my legs the last dozen hours, without bite or sup of any kind, so a little rest won't do any harm. You set down too, will you?"

"Thanks," I answered; "but, as I told you, I am in a great hurry to get home; so, as I cannot do you any good I am

afraid, I think the best thing I can do is to try to find my way out of this wood by myself."

He suddenly started to his feet.

"No, you don't," he shouted, in a threatening tone. "Just you set down when I tell you, now."

This was embarrassing, and no mistake; but there was nothing for it but to comply.

I sat on the ground a little distance from him.

"It's rather lucky, for me, I've met you," he said, after a short interval. "I was just then wondering how I was going to get on. I guess I should have had to have done a bit of burgling to-night, for I couldn't have gone much further. But, now that I've met you, I fancy I shall be able to get along more easy."

"If I can help you in any way," I said, "I shall be happy to do so; though I really don't know whether I ought to. You can see, I shall be running some risk; as any one who aids or abets a convict to escape, lays himself open to heavy punishment."

"Oh, don't bother yourself about that," replied the man; "I don't want to hurt you, if I can help it; you've only got to do just what I tell you to do, that's all—if you don't I'll not be answerable for the consequences."

This was comforting for me!

"Why, you don't think I've found my way out of that hole," he continued, jerking his thumb over his shoulder to indicate the prison, "without having run some risks?—why, I don't quite know yet what I've done. I had to hit a warder over the head rather badly, because he came in my way, and I don't know when he will get up again. So you see," he said, coolly, "I'm not going to stick at trifles, if necessary."

This sounded ominous, indeed. It was evident that my new companion was even less desirable than I had thought.

"But, I tell you," I said, as soothingly as I could, "I can do you no harm, or good, for that matter. I can't tell you where to go, and it's no good your following me. We had better separate, each going on his own path. I don't mind even going so far as to give you my word that I will say nothing about having met you. I don't know what you've been convicted for, whether you are innocent or guilty; but am willing to give you the benefit of the doubt."

"Very kind that is of you, guvnor," he said, grimly; "but I want something more than that—sit down will you! Now, how much money have you got?"

"Very little," I replied. "Only a few shillings."

"Well, hand 'em over; they're better than nothin' at all."

I gave the fellow what I had. Resistance was useless. It amounted to five shillings and fourpence. He soon discovered, though, that I had a watch; and that also changed hands, together with my silver pencil-case, and one or two trinkets.

By this time, I was beginning to feel intensely indignant; but indignation was entirely thrown away. I was, obviously, at the man's mercy. Even supposing that he did not possess the iron bar, his physical strength was so far superior to mine, that he could have broken my neck without much difficulty.

"Now, then," I said, "I've given you all I have got. I can do no more for you."

It would have been wise for me to have said no more; but, in my intense anger, I let my tongue move rather freely.

"A few minutes ago," I said, "I told you I was ready to let you escape if you could, and would even have helped you, as far as I might have been able; but, now that you have shown yourself so ungrateful, I withdraw the promise I gave you, and I shall be by no means sorry to hear you are recaptured and taken back to the punishment you so richly deserve."

Directly I had spoken, I regretted it.

He rose to his feet again.

"All right, guvnor," he said, "don't alarm yourself. But you and me ain't done yet—we ain't said good-bye to each other yet."

"Why, what more do you want?" I demanded. "You may search me if you like, I have not got another farthing about me."

"P'raps not," he said, coolly; "but you've got something on that I want, all the same."

I looked at the fellow in wonder, quite ignorant of his meaning.

"What I want," he said, coming close to me, and putting his hand on my arm, "is them clothes you're wearing."

I started back in horror.

"You see," he explained, "as long as I've got these togs on, I can't go near a house; but when I'm dressed like you are,

there'll be some chance of getting through, so now you'll kindly take them things off as sharp as you like."

"But, what am I to wear?" I gasped.

"Oh, you can just put on my togs; they ain't half bad when you've got used to 'em."

I was dumbfounded. I turned away for an instant with a mad idea of trying to escape by flight; but the convict raised his crowbar so threateningly that I thought it wiser to desist.

I clearly saw what he meant now.

Not only was he going to try to escape in my clothes, but I was to be left alone and lost, branded in the sight of the world—if human aid reached me—an escaped convict!

CHAPTER IV.

RELUCTANTLY enough I began to undress myself. Fortunately the weather was so hot that there was no risk of catching cold.

My captor was not content until I had stripped off even my shirt. I supposed he recognised the necessity of making his costume complete.

Had the situation been less serious I should have found plenty of amusement in his efforts to clothe himself in my cast-off garments.

As I have remarked, the escaped convict was broad-shouldered, and more heavily built than I, although about the same height. The consequence was that a considerable strain was put on my garments. The shirt refused to meet; to adjust the collar was out of the question. He left the waistcoat unbuttoned; and an ominous crack as he donned my coat testified that an accident had happened.

When the change was complete he certainly looked a guy. I could not help hoping that any one who saw him would at once jump to the conclusion that he had stolen his clothing.

My hat refused to stay on his head. He tore the lining out; but even then he could only wear it perched uneasily at the back of his head.

I had all the time been wondering what he would do when he came to my boots. His foot was of the massive type, whilst mine was certainly not larger than the average. Added to that, my fall into the stream had made them shrink. It was clear to me he would never be able to get them on. After trying once or twice, he gave it up as a bad job.

"I guess I'll have to stick to my own boots after all," he said. "I must change them when I get to some town."

I was extremely pleased that it was out of the question for him to appropriate mine. His heavy, clumping pair would have still further hampered my march. As it was, I felt so excessively uncomfortable in the sack-like, coarse clothing in which I was forced to dress myself, that I was sufficiently miserable.

"Now then," he said, when he had made the best toilet possible in the circumstances, "I think we can say good-bye to each other."

I was more than ready to do so. At that moment I was seated on the ground, trying hard to force on my boots, which had so shrunk that I found it a most difficult job.

The man watched me for a moment, and then told me to stop.

"I don't think you'll be able to get those on," he remarked. "You'd better let me take them after all."

He coolly appropriated them, and tossed them as far as he could into the bushes.

"You see," he said, kindly deigning to explain the motive of his action, "I don't want you to find your way home too soon. The longer you're about it, the better for me."

I was dumb with anger. I believe, at that moment, I could have shot him with pleasure.

"I wish I had a little bit of rope," he said half to himself, "I would then make matters still more sure."

I was thankful enough that his wish was ungratified. I had no desire to be left bound as well as lost.

He felt in my pockets as if searching for the needed rope, and then drew out my handkerchief.

This brought matters to a crisis.

Coward although I had so far shown myself to be, the idea of being left alone in the middle of a wood in Dartmoor, tied to a tree, made me fairly desperate.

He had let his crowbar fall on the grass whilst dressing.

I made a quick jump for it, and seized it before he could prevent me.

I suppose I must have looked dangerous; for, without another word, he sprang into the bushes and made his way rapidly through them.

I had half a mind to follow him; but the rapidity with which he disappeared convinced me that it was impossible for me

to catch him up. Even if I did, the issue of the struggle would be doubtful, and I had no particular fancy for a duel in the middle of a wood.

I listened to his retreating footsteps; and, when he had quite departed, sat down to review my position.

One thing was certain: I could not hope to walk through the thorny pathway and then over the stony moor in my stocking feet. It was imperative that I should recover my boots somehow. I had noticed carefully the direction in which he had thrown them, and, after a quarter of an hour's painful search, at last discovered them.

I managed to put them on, after considerable exertion, and then commenced my journey in the opposite direction to that in which the convict had disappeared.

I carried the iron rod with me, in case I should happen to cross his path again. Of this there seemed but little chance, unless he were unintentionally to cross my track.

I plodded vigorously on. The first anxiety was to get out of this horrible wood. I imagined it could not be very large, and feared I had really been making a circuit of it.

Until I struck the open country, there was no hope of finding a road, or, what was still more important, a human being.

My own trouble had up to now almost monopolised my thoughts.

Now I began to remember my sister Bertha. It added to my discomfort and annoyance to think how frightened she would be if I did not return at the appointed time. Still more alarmed would she be when John turned up without me. I greatly feared that her anxiety on my account would have a prejudicial effect on her health.

These considerations made me press forward still more desperately, though I was fast becoming tired and exhausted.

At last, to my immense joy, I saw a glimmering of light between the trees, and in a few minutes more, found myself on the edge of the wood, overlooking a vast extent of undulating moor.

I had not the ghost of an idea which way to walk. The sun afforded me no help, for clouds now covered it. It was pretty certain that the anticipated storm was coming. Far away on the horizon the sky was black.

To add to my other troubles, it looked as though I was going to be caught in the coming tempest.

Having no watch, I had no idea of the time; but it seemed to me that I must have walked two or three hours before I came across a road. When I actually struck it, I had no means of telling whether to turn to the right or to the left. In the distance, however, I espied a finger-post, and I plodded towards it in the hope that it would give me some clue as to my whereabouts.

On reaching it I found that I had, after all, been walking in the wrong direction.

There was nothing for it but to retrace my steps as quickly as possible. I had some hope that my wanderings had led me somewhat in the direction of home, and that in another hour or so, I might be safely housed at Farmer Russell's; but fate was against me.

Coming towards me on the road, I spied a cart, in which a man was seated. Apparently he was asleep, for the horse was jogging on towards me, and no notice was taken of my shouts. When, however, he was about thirty yards away the driver seemed to wake up suddenly. In a moment he pulled his horse up short, then turned it rapidly round and galloped away from me as hard as he could go.

I shouted after him, and attempted to catch him up; but it was in vain.

For a moment I was angry, very angry, with the man for thus leaving me. I had intended to try and get a lift towards home. But remembering what I had for the moment forgotten, that I was now arrayed in convict dress, the carter's action was easily accounted for.

I was rather glad, on second thoughts, that he had avoided me. There is no knowing what he might have felt it his duty to do. Perhaps, on the whole, it was better that I should plod on, wearily though it might be, and hope to meet no one at all until I was safe in Farmer Russell's house.

On turning the next corner, to my surprise I again saw the cart, but this time approaching me, and in it were seated two men.

They approached me warily. I walked straight on with the consciousness of innocence, although, at the same time, I felt considerable uneasiness.

When they were within twenty yards of me, they stopped.

I walked towards them, and asked them, as ordinary a tone as I could assume, if they would direct me towards Farmer Russell's house.

They whispered to each other, and then both left the cart.

I did not much like the way in which they approached me, but I tried to appear as nonchalant as possible.

They did not come quite close. Probably the sight of the crowbar which I still carried made them cautious.

"Look here, my men," I said, "I have met with an unfortunate accident. What will you drive me to Farmer Russell's for?"

Instead of replying directly to my question, they again whispered to each other. Then one of them, who had been addressed by the other as Peter, invited me to step into the cart.

I obeyed, thinking that as we drove along I might explain the situation to them.

No sooner, however, had I seated myself, than Peter seized me from behind, whilst his companion wrenched the crowbar from my hand, and in another minute a rope was passed round my arms, and I found myself firmly pinioned.

"Look here, my men," I cried, angrily, "don't make fools of yourselves. I tell you I am a tourist, who has lost his way, and a convict whom I met has made me change clothes with him."

"All right," said Peter; "you'll have to tell that story to the magistrate. There's a reward out for the capture of the escaped convict."

"But surely you don't think I am a convict? Do I look like one?"

"Your hair is pretty short," said Harris, my other captor.

It was unfortunate that I had had my hair cut only a couple of days before at the village, where the hairdresser was by no means too skilful. As I wore no hat, it was impossible to conceal this evident sign of guilt.

I did my utmost to persuade the men that they had made a mistake, and that it would be far better for them to acknowledge it now. But I soon found that all my arguments were in vain. The carters were most obtuse specimens of the Devonshire rustic. They seemed to have but one idea in their head, and that was that they might secure a reward by taking me before the magistrates.

Finding arguments, persuasion, and threats all of no avail, I resigned myself to my situation, and kept silent.

We jolted over the rough road; and at last reached the neighbouring town, just as a drenching rain began to fall.

I was the observed of all observers, as I was driven through the streets to the police-office. There I was duly unbound, and brought before the Inspector.

I at once demanded to be brought before a magistrate. It seemed, however, that there was no magistrate immediately available; and the Inspector seemed to think himself quite capable of managing this case without the assistance of any higher official.

"You'll see plenty of magistrates to-morrow morning, my man," he said to me in a tone that was somewhat exasperating, and certainly far from being reassuring. "The less you say now the better for yourself, so I warn you."

If the rustics were obstinate and obtuse, this wretched Inspector was ten times worse. He seemed to imagine that all my explanations and excuses were but clever devices for trying to put him off the scent. Evidently he regarded himself as preternaturally acute, and smiled pityingly on me as I brought forward some convincing arguments of his mistake.

Seeing that it was absolutely impossible to get any satisfaction out of the fellow, I implored him to send a messenger to my sister. This he seemed not unwilling to do, but told me I must pay the messenger myself. This, of course, was out of the question. I had no money; nor, in fact, anything about me of any value whatever.

The gross unfairness of the treatment to which I was being subjected, and the covert insolence of the Inspector's remarks, so incensed me that I lost my temper, and indulged for a second time that day in an unwise tirade. Its only result was that I was forthwith put into a cell, and left to address my complaints and protestations to the four bare walls.

CHAPTER V.

How I passed the remainder of that day I have no clear recollection.

I remember lying down and falling into an uneasy slumber, from which I was awakened by the entrance of a constable, who brought me some miserable bread and a mess which he called coffee. He informed me at the same time that I could have something better to eat if I liked to pay for it. That was impossible; and I found that no amount of promises to pay in the future were of any avail.

The constable took after his superior officer, and evidently considered that I was

a deep-dyed scoundrel, and that all my protestations were simply the machinations of an unusually acute scamp.

I demanded once more to see the Inspector; and, much against his will, the constable consented to try and bring him.

Mr. Inspector seemed in a completely self-gratulatory mood. Clearly he had not had such a good stroke of business as capturing an escaped convict for many a day.

My object in seeing him was to try and persuade him to let me have an interview with a solicitor at once. I knew that if I could only get to talk with an educated man, I could prove in two minutes that a terrible mistake had been made, and that my immediate release was certain.

But the Inspector was again impervious to all argument and persuasion. He said that it was now too late to send for any solicitor; that all the offices were closed; that he had no one he could send, and so forth. He added that I should have plenty of opportunities in the morning of getting any assistance that I might be entitled to.

In despair I sank back on my wretched apology for a bed; and, utterly exhausted with my day's adventures, fell into an uneasy sleep.

I was routed out early in the morning, and compelled to make my bed and clean out my cell.

In the course of a few hours I received the welcome intelligence that I was to be taken before the magistrate.

All this time, be it remembered, I had been suffering terribly from anxiety with regard to my sister.

John would, of course, have reached home long ago, and would have reported that I had taken the "short cut," as he termed it. As the hours went by, they would be getting more anxious about me, and would come to the conclusion that I was lost on Dartmoor. That meant that an exploring party would have been despatched after me, and that my sister's anxiety and distress on my account would increase with every moment's suspense and delay. I scarcely dared think of the state in which I should find her when I was at last free.

I was ushered into a small and dirty court-room.

The magistrates had already disposed of one or two cases of minor importance, but it was clear that mine was the great event of the day.

The place was crowded with townspeople, for the news of the capture of the escaped convict had created considerable excitement.

I knew I was looking far from my best, and could not hope to make a favourable impression. I had had no opportunity of making a toilet. The abominable clothes in which I was dressed made me look worse than I could have imagined possible.

Before I was permitted to speak, the Inspector gave his account of my capture, and the Bench were about to call the witnesses, when I interrupted, thinking it was high time that they heard my version of the matter, and not doubting for an instant that I had but to speak to prove my innocence.

I have remarked that the rustics were obtuse and obstinate; the Inspector still more so; I now found that a country magistrate could beat them all.

These worthy Justices were evidently under the impression that their duty was to convict criminals, and that those who came before them were, by the nature of things, guilty.

I told my story, and they listened with a sort of pitying smile on their faces. It seemed as if they thought I might certainly have invented a very much better tale.

At the close of my narration, they took no trouble to cross-examine me, but in a short, snappy way, the Chairman said: "Remanded."

This was too much for me.

I insisted on knowing why he did not investigate the case at once.

He deigned to explain, so far as to say: "Remanded for the attendance of the warder from Princetown to identify."

This was going too far with a vengeance; and, at the risk of being punished for contempt of court, I protested against the treatment to which I had been subjected.

I showed my boots, and asked the magistrate if he thought that any convict could possibly wear boots like those? I offered to do him a sketch on the spot, to show that I was an artist by profession.

I was positively astonished at my eloquence, and it was patent that my story carried conviction to the minds of most of the audience, if not to the magistrates.

The Chairman looked a little uneasy, and bent down to consult with his clerk. When he had finished, he addressed me in a somewhat more conciliatory tone:

"Your story may be correct," he said, "or it may not; but that will be a point

for future consideration. In the meantime, you must be remanded; but you can have any assistance you may require, or that may be deemed necessary."

"But on what charge am I remanded?" I reiterated. "I have done nothing, and am perfectly innocent."

"That may be," the magistrate responded; "but at all events there is one thing that is perfectly certain, you are in possession of Government property," pointing to the clothes I was wearing; "and that is a presumption against you. Take the prisoner away," he added, in a tone which admitted of no further argument.

I was again removed to the cell. The Inspector paid me an early visit. His bearing was now somewhat altered. It was clear that the story I had told had considerably impressed this worthy.

He told me that if I liked he would fetch me a solicitor.

Of course I jumped at the offer. I told him to lose no time, as the matter was urgent. I waited, and waited; but no solicitor came. I heard the clock strike eleven. Still no one came.

I banged on my door in futile anger. I was going almost mad at the thought that the hours were passing, and that all this while my sister's nervous fears must be increasing.

At length the door opened, and, instead of the solicitor, the wretched Inspector again presented himself.

"Where is the solicitor?" I exclaimed, fiercely.

"You can go now, sir," he said. How changed his tone. "The charge has been withdrawn."

"Withdrawn!" I said. "What on earth do you mean?"

The Inspector looked as foolish as he well could.

"Well, sir, we are very sorry indeed, of course; but we have only done our duty, you know."

"Yes, yes," I broke in, impatiently; "but what does it all mean? What has happened?"

"Well, sir, it seems they have captured the real convict, and there is no doubt about his identification. So there is no reason why we should now detain you one moment."

I did not delay matters by further conversation with this imbecile specimen of the Force, but rushed out into the street.

The cries with which the small boys greeted me, promptly reminded me of the

costume which I still wore ; but this was not a time to be particular about matters of that sort. After all, the townsfolk had had their full look at me already, and it would make no difference to me what they might think now.

I ran to the nearest inn, and ordered a trap instantly.

The story was already known there, and I received the congratulations and commiserations of several gentlemen who were standing in the hall.

Now that my innocence was so clearly established, I received every possible attention. The landlord lent me an overcoat and a hat, and in five minutes I was driving as hard as I could towards home.

It was a most anxious moment for me when I first caught sight of Farmer Russell's house.

I quite expected to find some one on the look-out ; that there would be a hue and cry after me ; and that I should find my sister overwhelmed by distress and nervous excitement.

As I approached the gate of the farm-yard there was no one visible. There was no sign of excitement of any kind.

I instructed the driver to pull up at the back gate, and then, trembling in every limb, I crossed the farm-yard as rapidly as I could and ran upstairs.

I found the door of my sister's room shut. I knocked gently at it, fearing the worst.

"Is that you, Tom?" I heard Bertha ask.

"Yes," I replied, trying to keep my voice from trembling. I was astonished to hear her speak so quietly and calmly. As far as I could recognise, there was no change from her ordinary tone.

"All right," she said, quite cheerfully, "I will be down in another five minutes."

What could it mean? There was no trouble apparent in her way of speaking, neither was there any special joy at my return.

I could not make it out at all.

I went to my own room and hastily divested myself of the hated garments I had been forced to wear for the last twenty-four hours.

Then I felt like myself once more.

I quickly made my way downstairs, and met Mrs. Russell, who was coming from the kitchen.

"Good morning, sir," she said, cheerily.

"Glad to see you back again."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Where do you think I have been?"

"Well, sir, I suppose you have been staying at Moreton for the night. I suppose John will be back soon."

I looked at her in amazement, and was preparing to cross-examine her, when Bertha entered the room, looking much better than when I left her the day previous.

"Good morning, Tom," she said, kissing me. "I am sorry to be so late to breakfast ; in fact, it is lunch-time, is it not?"

"It is turned twelve o'clock," I said, scarcely knowing what else to reply at the moment.

"Well, the fact is," she continued, "I was so ill the night before last that I felt I must not pass another bad night, so I took a sleeping draught early last evening, and went to bed at seven. It has had its full effect, for I only awoke half an hour ago. These are dreadful hours to keep in the country," said Bertha, with a smile ; "but really you see it is not my fault."

I cannot describe how thankful I felt at hearing this announcement. All my anxiety on her account was pure waste after all. If I had only known this before, I could have endured the troubles, and privation, and annoyance I had gone through with comparative lightheartedness.

I considered for a time whether I should ever tell Bertha all the adventures which I had undergone. At first I was disinclined to do so, for the figure I cut was by no means an heroic one.

Having regard to the fact, however, that our host and hostess would hear the whole story on their next visit to the village, and that it would inevitably reach Bertha's ears, I thought it best to confess the whole circumstance.

I made as light of it as I could, in order not to terrify her ; but she was greatly distressed at the recital of my woes. In fact, it made her so nervous that from that day our excursions to the moor were stopped, and soon afterwards we left the neighbourhood.

John turned up in the course of the day. The trap, as I had imagined, had broken down hopelessly, not long after I had left him. He had been caught in the storm and forced to take shelter at an inn near, where he had stayed the night, returning with a man to fetch the trap next morning.

My strange companion, the escaped con-

vict, was made to disgorge the watch and other valuables which he had stolen from me; and I felt, I must confess, much satisfaction in hearing him condemned to an additional term of imprisonment for having broken prison, and for a murderous assault on the warder, who narrowly escaped with his life.

It afforded me still further gratification to learn that he had been captured because of the strange figure he cut in my garments. He attempted to get a fresh pair of boots in a village shop. The shoemaker had noted the state of his awkwardly-fitting clothes, for the coat had split right up the back.

The news of a convict's escape had reached the village, so that suspicion was naturally aroused. The village constable was quietly sent for, and, when the man left the shop, he was at once arrested and safely lodged in gaol.

He is, in all probability, there still.

SUMMER IN THE CITY.

By HARRIETT STOCKALL.

WHAT have you brought me, dear,
From your old garden in the west?
Come, wanderer, to my longing breast,
And bring your treasures here.
Syringa, smelling of the south,
Great purple pansies, golden-eyed,
Tall lilies in their snowy pride,
Red rosebuds, like your mouth.

And from that quiet spot
Where we two stood so long ago,
And vowed to love through sun and snow,
This blue forget-me-not.
Ah! lay them down, dear love, and come
Close to the heart that ached so sore
To have our weary parting o'er,
To bid you welcome home.

You come from sylvan joys,
From sunny dreams among the flowers
That mind you of your childish hours,
Back to the city's noise;
From ease and peace, the lap of home,
From calm content of country days,
To strife and fret of busy ways,
Dear wandering dove, you come!

Creep close, ah! closer yet,
Lay your bright head upon my breast,
And tell me that you love our nest,
That life hath no regret;
No haunting dreams of ease laid down
To share a worker's rugged way,
No backward looks at yesterday,
No fading of love's crown!

Ah, dear! what need of words?
With you the summer days have come,
Your voice makes music in our home
As sweet as summer birds:
And lo! you bring, like Noah's dove,
Greenness and beauty, joy for rue,
While I, I have no gift for you,
But love, dear wife, but love!

CHANCE OR FATE!

By GERTRUDE WARDEN.

It was four o'clock on a depressing, autumn afternoon.

The railway-station at one of our most popular watering-places was not so crowded but that the noisy mirth of a group of yachting men, assembled to take leave of one of their number, attracted considerable attention among the passengers, porters, and loiterers, collected on the platform.

In one instance this notice was wholly of a condemnatory kind.

Opposite the spot where the young men stood, a gentleman sat alone in a first class compartment, from the window of which he cast frequent glances of contempt and disapproval at the loud-voiced men outside.

These last were typical Englishmen; four tall, well-built young fellows, with fair skins burned red or copper-colour, gathered round a fifth, still taller than they, and evidently older—a yellow-haired giant, with a fine figure that was beginning to tend towards stoutness, a good-looking, red face, and a manner that was at once genial, didactic, and self-assertive.

Whether from instinct, or from the fact that he was diametrically opposed in type to this particular individual, the solitary traveller before referred to took an especial dislike to this ponderous fair man.

"Great bumptious brute!" he said to himself. "Fancy being married to such a man!"

With this second reflection, the blood rushed to his sensitive, dark face.

He was rather under than over the middle-height, with a slight, boyish-looking figure, a face rather interesting than handsome, and delicate, restless hands, with which he incessantly stroked his moustache. His nerves were strained to their utmost tension; doubt, uncertainty, pity, and passionate love were blended in his mind with a great desire for solitude; and, in this phase of nerve tension, the noisy laughter of those four bronzed yachting men, and the self-complacent platitudes of the fifth, irritated our traveller almost beyond endurance.

Suddenly the door of his compartment was burst open. The yellow-haired man jumped in, directed a porter where to place his portmanteau in a deep bass voice, suitable to his large frame, tossed

the man sixpence, with an air of princely patronage; then rattled down the window, and leaned out for a few valedictory words to his friends.

"I shan't go northwards until to-morrow," he observed.

At which there was a laughing chorus of:

"To-morrow, Teddy!"

"Well, they don't expect me yet," he went on, smiling with a radiant, superior calm. "I say, boys, we really have had a most excellent time together!"

"Pity you didn't keep up that diary. Might have interested them at home," suggested one of the four.

"You might compile an amended edition in your spare time in London, Gilpin!" put in another.

"I can't make you boys believe it; but I shall only stay in town long enough to see my lawyer——"

"And then take the next express back to the bosom of your family. We know, Gilpin."

"And, afterwards," the big man went on, imperturbably, "I shall permanently settle down in the North, and put together my experiences into book-form."

The train was moving off by this time. The four yachting men ran alongside of it, waving noisy good-byes until it steamed more quickly out of the station; and the fair man, after repeatedly nodding to his friends, sank heavily into a seat, and gazed around him with an air of patronising benevolence.

He evidently wanted to talk, and, what was more, he meant to.

First, he asked concerning the windows, whether his travelling companion minded having them down; next, he grew discursive on the fact that it was not a smoking compartment; but that he meant to smoke. After which, observing with a genial smile and a North-country inflection:

"Eh, but it's good to be in England again;" he stretched out his feet across the seat opposite, took several whiffs at his pipe, and prepared himself for conversation.

It was in vain that the other man shut his eyes, opened them with a stony glare, took out letters to read, or affected to be absorbed in making calculations in his note-book. "Teddy" was resolved to talk, and was soon in the middle of a slowly-delivered description of the perils of one of his last yachting excursions, and of the heroic bravery he himself had displayed therein.

Getting used to the deep, monotonous voice, his fellow-traveller's thoughts went off on their usual journey. His eyes were fixed on the cushions facing him; but his mind conjured up the vision of a woman with soft brown eyes full of sadness, a voice like the sweetest notes of a violin, and a touch so charged with magnetism that his very soul seemed to quiver at the memory of it.

He was on his way to her; and once in her presence he would scatter her objections, her protestations, to the winds, by the force of his passionate pleading. She was miserable, misunderstood, and neglected; eating her heart out among dreary and unsympathetic surroundings. For four years she had been beating her wings against the coldest and dullest of cages; and he was on his way now to set her free. It would be an injustice to her for him to listen to her remonstrances, and——

"Yes; marriage for the man of intellect, as well as for the man of action, is most undoubtedly a distinct failure."

So lectured the big, fair man, happy in the sound of his own voice; and his words struck upon his fellow-traveller's ears with a curious significance.

"And how about marriage for the woman of feeling, of passion, tied to a clod who underrates her value and overrates his own?" he snapped out.

"Teddy" put down his pipe and turned his somewhat expressionless light blue eyes with mild surprise upon the speaker.

"Women of feeling and passion, as you call them, are happily rare among our marriageable girls," he said, didactically. "A woman's capabilities, either of head or heart, are much more limited than a man's. Her sphere is the narrow content of the domestic hearth; and——"

"Domestic fiddlesticks," interrupted the younger man. "You talk as though women were all alike. Is every man fond of drink and bad company? No! Is every woman content with domestic drudgery? No, again! There is as much difference between them as there is between us."

"Teddy" gazed at him with a kind of fatherly protest, and then he inquired, if he was a married man.

His companion changed colour, and remarked haughtily that he "Did not see how that fact bore upon the question."

"But it does bear upon the question," said Teddy, with the same irritating geniality. "I am, I should say, a good

deal older than you, and I have been married several years to a woman of quite the average intelligence, and of more than the average looks and education. I was very fond of her; she was devoted to me; but, being a woman, she was incapable of understanding a man. She disliked my friends; failed to appreciate my literary tastes, and my love of travel; grew pettily jealous, and teased me with incessant questions as to how I spent my time; and finally took refuge in sullen silence, or treated me to scenes just when I required my mind clear for the composition of political speeches and pamphlets. My dear sir, I grew perfectly wretched; and the end of it was that about a year ago I went off on a tour for political purposes in Ireland; there picked up with some old bachelor chums; passed from one excursion to another, always intending to travel home the next week; and am now at length returning northwards a new man, restored to my pristine, contented state of mind, and all the more pleasantly anxious to see my wife, that I have plainly shown her I can get on excellently without her."

"And may I ask how your wife has been employing herself all the time?"

"I have only had brief notes from her,"

"Teddy" returned. "She knew it was discipline. But lately she has more than once begged me to return. So I am going back a little earlier than I had intended as a surprise for her."

"And you think she won't have consoled herself?" sneered the younger man.

"Your confidence in your own powers of retaining a woman's affection must be considerable!"

"Teddy's" stolid face changed at last, and it was with the peculiar coldness which only light eyes can assume that he turned upon his companion, and remarked:

"I have confidence in my wife, sir."

The other gave a short laugh, which he intended to be offensive, and which succeeded in being so, and to his intense relief silence was at length established between them. Even the but slightly sensitive mind of "Teddy" had at length received the impression that his travelling companion had no great liking for his society, and meant to make himself disagreeable. He did not know Bella, and therefore, could not estimate the impertinence and absurdity of his suggestion, that she could by any possibility have "consoled herself" for her husband's absence.

Bella was just an ordinary woman, quite happy pottering about the house, writing letters, or buying little things she did not want. Then there was a course of reading he had marked out for her, which, if properly followed—if properly followed—

"Teddy" had closed his eyes, and had fallen into a light doze, the duration of which he could never afterwards estimate.

From this he was roughly awakened by being hurled forward upon his hands and knees, and then flung against the side of the carriage with such violence that the glass of the window was shattered to a thousand pieces. He heard the crash of glass and a terrible roaring, as of some hungry monster somewhere in the distance. Opening his eyes, he found himself in complete darkness. A rush and rattle of whirling wheels mingled with the sound of long-drawn whistling and women's despairing shrieks. And from somewhere close to him came a groan of agony.

He was stunned at first by the force of the concussion. In the confined space in which he found himself, he could at first hardly do more than realise that he was still alive. Presently, by a little stretching and pushing of his large limbs, he learned that they were all unbroken, and, before the relief-party arrived, Mr. Harry Edwardes—for such was the true name of the man known among his chums by the nicknames of "Teddy" and "Gilpin"—had crawled from out of the ruins of his compartment, bruised and shaken, but without any serious hurt.

Drizzling rain fell from a leaden sky upon the scene of the disaster.

Signals misunderstood, and the unexpected shunting of a coal-truck across the line—such were the theories advanced afterwards as the cause of the accident.

But this Harry Edwardes did not learn until many hours were past. The results were what he now realised: a confused blockade of windowless carriages, flung off the line or hurled one on the top of the other, pyramidwise, across the rails; shrieks and moans of injured or terrified passengers; he himself standing upright and unhurt, and at his feet the body of a dead man.

Sick and giddy with the horror of the scene, he knelt beside the prostrate figure, and, unfastening his coat, placed his hand above the still heart. It was his fellow-traveller, with whom he had been wrangling, as it seemed, only a few short minutes

ago. His back had been broken by the collapse of the carriage, and the purpose of his journey, good or bad, had been frustrated.

A folded letter rustled beneath Harry Edwardes' hand upon the dead man's breast. Tears rushed to his eyes at the sound. It was probably from some woman who loved him, and to whom the tidings of his ghastly death must be communicated.

"Is he dead?" asked a man, stopping before the two figures, note-book in hand.

"Yes. He was in the same compartment with me. It's an awful sight."

"A friend of yours? What is his name?"

"I don't know. But here is a letter that may tell us."

Even while Edwardes drew out the letter, his questioner had been called away. Harry would have followed him, when his eyes fell on the handwriting.

Did all women write alike, or was he the victim of some delusion acting on his overwrought brain?

He looked at the letter again. It was the distracted appeal of a married woman, tempted, but striving to resist temptation, to the honour and chivalry of a man she had grown to love.

And the writer was his wife—Isabel Edwardes.

"I have been wrong, terribly wrong," she wrote. "I know it now. These flying visits to London, and the friendship that has grown up between us during the past few months, so naturally, from your relationship to my sister's husband, and constant presence at her house, have all been a mistake. Your letter proves it. Ah, Gerald, pity me and forgive me, if I have given you pain; I have been so dull, so unhappy, for so long, that your sympathy, and your thoughtfulness and kindness made me forget the dangers of my position. If you knew the life I lead at home; if you could tell what it is to a girl, brought up in Paris and London, among surroundings that were bright and beautiful, to be transplanted to a dreary manufacturing town, with a household of an old man and three good, narrowminded, old maids, who have hardly ever been outside their native town, and who think the bliss of being married to their brother ought to keep any woman happy. Of course, I should have protested long ago; but when I married, I was eighteen and he thirty-three. He had been single too long, and had been taught to think of

women as of two kinds only—drudges or toys. And as I was neither the one nor the other, I was a failure. And they have obeyed him so long at home that his manner at once puts me in the wrong. Besides all that, Gerald, I loved him. I have never complained of him before. You know it. But my heart has been dying in me for four years. And any man who treats me as a woman with a heart and head, has power to raise more tenderness in me than the thought of my husband can ever do again, I am afraid.

"You have often told me how you honour and reverence me. You must prove it by keeping away from me now. You have your work, your life, before you, Gerald. Let me go back home with feelings of gratitude, as well as friendship, towards you. Don't try to see me again; for my sake I ask it. Don't even write. I can hear about you from my sister. And when, later on, you marry some good woman, as I hope and pray you may, remember all I have told you, and that women and men are not so unlike in their natures as husbands too often think. Good night—I am crying so much I can't see what I write—and good-bye."

Harry Edwardes read this letter twice through and then destroyed it.

As soon as he arrived in London he drove to his sister-in-law's house and asked for his wife; and when Isabel Edwardes—pale and fragile-looking, with startled, dark eyes, and a shrinking constraint in her manner—made her appearance, she was lifted in her husband's arms, and embraced with the tenderness of a man who recovers what he has nearly lost.

They live in London now; and the next time Harry Edwardes goes abroad, Isabel is going with him. He has realised at last that a man may have other duties towards his wife than providing her with money to spend, and a house to live in. And he has had the astonishing discretion to let the dead past bury its dead; so that Isabel has never yet learned how a neglectful husband was taught a lesson, in a ghastly and never-to-be-forgotten fashion, by Chance or Fate.

A STOLEN HOLIDAY.

By LOUIS GRAY.

CHAPTER I.

"CURSES," Tommy Smith used to say, "are like blessings; they sometimes come

in disguise." When he said this he was thinking of his marriage.

Tommy Smith was a youthful barrister without fortune and without practice. Previous to his marriage, he had earned a precarious livelihood by writing for the Press; since he had had a wife he had lived very comfortably on her income. Still, at times he regretted, or pretended to regret, the old days. Then, as he was accustomed to say, he might occasionally have to go without his dinner; but he always had his fill of liberty—a thing which, since his marriage, he certainly had enjoyed to an extremely limited extent.

"Ah, my friends," he used to say to his old chums of an evening, as he prepared to start for the domestic hearth, "Ah, my friends, believe me, there's nothing in this world can compensate a man for having to go home for his tea."

Though Tommy was, no doubt, kept pretty strictly at home, still he contrived—during the day, if not during the evening—to see a good deal of his former associates. On the plea of attempting to work up a practice at the Bar, he induced his wife to consent to his retaining chambers at the Temple. To these he wended his way every morning, and there he spent many a pleasant hour, chatting over old times with old cronies who dropped in to have a glass of wine with their prosperous friend. Mrs. Smith knew nothing of these little diversions, and Tommy, well aware that she regarded the friends of his bachelor days with suspicion and dislike, took good care that she should know nothing of them.

One bright summer morning, Tommy was sitting solitarily in chambers, wishing he had somebody to talk to, or something to do, when an old acquaintance and namesake dropped in. Mr. Tom Smith, the new-comer, was a journalist who, having been for some time past out of employment, had called rather frequently on Tommy, chiefly for the purpose of effecting small loans. To-day, his errand was different and more pleasant; it was to inform his friend that he had at last obtained an appointment. The editor of the "Comet" had commissioned him to go to the South of France, and there witness and report upon certain army manoeuvres which were about to take place. Mr. Tom Smith knew as much about military affairs as he did about the music of the spheres; but he had full confidence in his own power of writing a series of brilliant articles on the manoeuvres.

"By George," said Tommy to his namesake, when he had heard his news, "I envy you. What wouldn't I give to be able to spend a week rollicking about the South of France in this splendid weather!"

"Why not come with me?" asked the pressman.

"Come with you!" repeated Tommy, in amazement. "Don't you know that I'm a married man?"

"Well, so am I," answered the pressman.

"Ah, but you're different," replied Tommy. "You're off on business. I only wish I had some business like it to get me a little liberty." And Tommy sighed.

The pressman reflected in silence for a moment. Then he said:

"Why don't you pretend to have business?"

"Eh? I don't understand you," responded the startled Tommy.

"Well, listen, and you soon will," said the pressman. "A little device has just occurred to me that will get you a pleasant holiday, if you like to use it. By an extraordinary coincidence, we both possess the uncommon cognomen of Smith; not merely Smith, but Thomas Smith. Now look, this letter from the editor"—and he drew out the letter of appointment from his pocket—"is addressed simply to Thomas Smith, Esq. Now, *prima facie*, that applies as much to you as to me. Why not take it home with you and tell your wife that it does apply to you? Tell her, in fact, that you have been appointed, *pro tem.*, a special correspondent of the 'Comet,' and that you must leave at once for the South of France. There would be nothing improbable about it. She knows you were at journalism before you married. And then you can draw the long bow about the honour and dignity of the appointment. She knows nothing about it, and will quite believe you."

"By George!" exclaimed Tommy, breathless with excitement at his friend's startling proposal.

"I think it would work very easily," said the journalist.

"But when I'm away she might find out the deception," objected Tommy.

"How?" asked Mr. Smith.

"She might make enquiries at the 'Comet' office."

"Well, what could they tell her there? All old Buffer—the editor—knows of me is that I'm a journalist, and I'm called Thomas Smith."

Tommy reflected for a moment.

"Perhaps she might want to come with me," he said, at last.

"Pooh! pooh!" replied Mr. Smith, "you must put your foot down on that. Tell her that life in a French camp is a frightful thing for a lady—that you couldn't hear of her being in such a place."

"If she by any accident found the trick out," said Tommy, doubtfully, "there would be the deuce to pay."

"But she can't find it out," replied Mr. Smith, "that's simply out of the question. To tell you the truth, I believe it's far more likely to do you good with her than harm. If you only managed the thing properly—tell her a few crams, you know, about being tired doing nothing, and wanting to make a name for yourself, and the good it is likely to do you in your profession—she'll swallow it all—she'll think you're a regular hero."

"But then," said Tommy, "I would not be admitted to the camp; the French authorities would not give passes to two correspondents from the 'Comet.'"

"Oh, that's easily arranged," answered the journalist. "You needn't go to the manoeuvres at all. You enjoy yourself at Paris. It will be very jolly just now with the Exhibition and all that; and I'll send for you to your wife a telegram from the camp each morning, saying that you haven't time to write and all's well."

Tommy had not at first been altogether taken with the project, but this last consideration—this prospect of a fortnight's holiday in Paris—was too much for him. With some hesitation he accepted the letter from the editor of the "Comet;" and with it in his pocket and a flutter at his heart, turned his face homewards, where the wife of his bosom was awaiting him.

When he informed Mrs. Smith that he had been appointed special correspondent of the "Comet" at the French manoeuvres, she appeared incredulous. When he showed her the editor's letter she was quite upset. At first she would not hear of his going away. Then she calmed down a little and consented to it on her being permitted to go with him. It was only after a long struggle that she abandoned this ground, and consented to his going alone on condition that he was away not longer than a fortnight, and that every morning he sent her a telegram.

The next day Tommy started for France. Mrs. Smith was too much upset to see him off. At Charing Cross he met his name-

sake, and together they travelled to Paris. There they parted company, the journalist going south to report on the manoeuvres, Tommy remaining in Paris to enjoy the many pleasures of that gay capital.

Tommy enjoyed himself thoroughly. He knew Paris well, and loved it better; and now he had a more favourable opportunity than he ever had had before of experiencing all its delights. Hitherto when there, he either had too little cash or too little freedom. Now he had as much as he desired of both; and this unusual state of affairs enabled him to attain to something like ideal bliss.

The days flew past on golden wings. Without a care to trouble him, or a want unsatisfied, Mr. Tommy Smith spent his time lounging about the pleasant boulevards, sipping coffee in the café, dining in luxurious state, frequenting the theatres, and reading the "Comet." The last was his only serious duty, and it must be admitted that he did not neglect it. He always remembered that, when he returned to the wife of his bosom, he should have to pass himself off as the writer of the articles descriptive of the manoeuvres, and so he felt that it would be well to know what those articles contained. Accordingly, every night before going for dinner, he made it a rule to purchase a copy of the "Comet," while over his dinner he read and re-read all that was said in it of the French army manoeuvres.

Nearly a fortnight had elapsed, and Tommy was anticipating with regret the speedy termination of his stolen holiday. Seated at his dinner, he was turning over the pages of the "Comet," which, as usual, he had purchased for his day's study, when his eye caught a paragraph which made him start.

As he glanced over it, his face turned ghastly pale. Calling for a glass of brandy, he hastily drank it; and then, to make sure that he was not mistaken, he read the paragraph carefully through a second time. There could be no doubt as to its meaning. It ran as follows:

"FRENCH ARMY MANŒUVRES.

"DREADFUL EXPLOSION.

"TUESDAY MORNING.—This morning an ammunition-waggon of the defence force exploded with fearful violence, killing several soldiers and civilians who were in its vicinity.

"LATER.—It is announced that Mr. Thomas Smith, Special Correspondent of the 'Comet,' is among the dead."

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Tommy Smith read the announcement of the correspondent's death, he was doubly horrified. He was horrified at the poor fellow's fate, and he was, if possible, even more horrified at his own situation. The deception he had practised on his wife must now be laid bare; no further concealment was possible. All he could do was to return to England with the greatest expedition, and humbly make a full confession to her, and implore her forgiveness. It was not a pleasant task, but it could not be shirked.

The next morning he packed his portmanteau and started homewards. His intention was, on arriving at Charing Cross, to go straight to Norwood, see his wife, and have the ordeal over as soon as possible. That was his intention when he started, but by the time he had reached Charing Cross it had altered.

His courage, strong enough in Paris, had quite disappeared in London; so, after much hesitation, he determined to pass that night in the Temple, and put off his explanation with his wife till the next morning, when he hoped his nerve would be restored.

Rolling himself in his travelling-rug, he stretched himself on the sofa in his chambers. There he spent a miserable, sleepless night, such as it seldom before had been his hard lot to endure.

Morning had come. He had got up and dressed, and was preparing, with a doleful heart, to set out for Norwood, when a knock sounded on the oak.

"Who can that be?" he asked himself, in surprise. "It's vacation time; and, besides, every one knows or thinks I'm out of town. I wonder who it can be?"

A second knock sounded.

Feeling very uncomfortable—for he had guilty forebodings that the summons meant something unpleasant—Tommy went to the door. To his amazement and consternation, the person knocking was his wife!

"So you're not dead," she said, quite coolly.

Evidently she had found out the deception, and knew that the person who had really perished was not her husband.

"No, dear," answered Tommy, meekly.

Mrs. Tommy gazed at him for a moment in silence, uncertain apparently what more to say; while Tommy stood still, feeling very guilty and still more uncomfortable.

"Aren't you glad I'm not dead, dear?" he at last ventured to enquire.

"No, I'm not," answered Mrs. Tommy, fiercely.

Tommy gave a start of terror. This reception was even worse than any he had anticipated.

Both husband and wife remained silent for a few seconds after this little outburst; but Mrs. Tommy was only gathering her strength together in order to express her opinions with due precision and emphasis. Tommy knew that. He had seen her do it before. It was a pretty, deliberate little way she had. He waited with fear and trembling till the storm should begin. At last it started.

"You are a ruffian, sir; a scoundrel," she said, speaking slowly and deliberately. "I have just come to tell you that——"

"How very considerate!" interrupted Tommy, who felt that he must put on a bold face.

"I have just come to tell you that," repeated Mrs. Tommy, "before I give you to the police."

"To the police!" exclaimed Tommy, in amazement.

"Yes, to the police," repeated Mrs. Tommy, almost fiercely.

"What are you talking about?" asked Tommy, angrily. "I have done nothing that the police can touch me for."

A look of sublime contempt passed over Mrs. Tommy's features.

"You are trying to brazen it out," she said, quietly. "It's no use. Everything has been discovered; and if ever a man deserved to be convicted, you're he."

"Upon my word, Lily," said Tommy, in bewilderment, "either you're out of your wits or I am. Do you really think a man can be sent to jail simply for a little bit of a frolic such as I have indulged in?"

"A little bit of a frolic!" cried Mrs. Tommy, in horrified tones. "Did ever mortal hear anything like that? Sir, you are a perfect monster! I thought you wicked enough before this; but such horrible callousness is more than I anticipated in my worst moments. Such a sin, and crime, and shame a mere frolic!"

And the lady paused, out of breath with her own vehemence.

Tommy gazed at his wife in utter bewilderment.

"Now, look here, Lily," he said. "Be reasonable. Let us forget and forgive what's past, and be friends again. I'm sure I'm very sorry if I've deceived you in any way."

"Forget and forgive!" repeated Mrs. Tommy, with horror. "Good heavens, what a man! He has ruined my life and disgraced me for ever, and this is the way he talks of it. Talks of it as if it were the merest little indiscretion! Sir, such brutal levity is even more repulsive than your crime. I tell you now, once for all, that although I will not give you to the police, as I should, still, never again shall I look in your face. Good-bye, and good-bye for ever!"

And, without a moment's pause, Mrs. Smith turned and rushed frantically down the stairs; and before Tommy could say or do anything, she had disappeared from his sight.

"Well," said Tommy to himself, as he turned back into his rooms and shut the door behind him; "well, I have always consistently maintained that all women are mad; but I'm blessed if I ever saw one so utterly stark raving mad as Lily appears to be. I didn't expect a very flattering or agreeable reception from her; but I never imagined she would go on like this. 'Ruined her;' 'disgraced her;' 'give me to the police.' Surely either she is out of her senses or I am. By George! it's just possible that it's I that am. After such a time as I have had of it my wits may be wandering, and the whole thing may be a dream or a delusion. What between one thing and another I feel quite silly. Really I shouldn't be surprised if I proved half out of my mind!"

And Tommy walked over to the mirror and began to examine his features in it, to see if he could detect any traces of insanity.

He was engaged in this interesting occupation when another knock sounded on the door—a knock of such terrific violence that it made him almost jump into the fireplace.

"Heavens!" he muttered to himself, as soon as he had recovered his equilibrium; "Heavens! there's no delusion there! She's come back again, I suppose, madder than ever. What the deuce is she hammering the door with! She must have got hold of a poker!"

And Tommy paused, and wondered, and reflected.

"I don't think I ought to open the door," he said to himself. "It is not pleasant to have her hammering at it like that; but it's better than having her sparring at me in here. It's no agreeable thing to encounter a mad woman with a poker. Good

heavens, how strong she is!" he exclaimed, as the tremendous knocking was renewed. "I always knew she had muscle; but I never imagined she was up to the like of that. There she goes again. By George, if I don't open she'll bang the door in! If any of the fellows are in above, I'll be disgraced for life. Just imagine what they'll think when they see my wife battering at my door with a poker or something! Good heavens, she's starting again! I must open. Hi, there," he cried out; "stop a minute! I'll capitulate! I'll open the door!"

With these words he drew back the bolt and opened the door. When his eyes fell upon the person who had knocked, his face became ghastly pale, and his eyes started almost from their sockets. He staggered backwards across the room, and, when he came to the wall, he leant against it, weak with excitement and fear. He raised his hand to wipe the cold sweat off his brow.

"Oh, heavens!" he muttered as he did so, "it is as I feared. My wits are gone! I've become subject to horrible delusions! I'm a drivelling idiot."

Meanwhile, the person who had knocked so vigorously entered the room. It was no other than Tommy's double—the correspondent who was reported to have been killed by the explosion at the French manoeuvres.

The correspondent showed no sign of surprise at Tommy's obvious consternation. He looked just as if he expected it. Not only so, but he manifested no pleasure at meeting his old friend again. On the contrary, he gazed in a fierce, threatening way upon Tommy, as if he had come to upbraid him for some wrong or to charge him with some crime.

So from his first words it appeared he had.

"You miserable scoundrel!" he began, "you did not expect to see me alive, did you?"

"No, Smith," answered Tommy, in a faltering voice, "I thought you were dead."

"But you see I'm not," cried the correspondent. "No, I have come back, you see, when you least expected me. I have come back to demand an explanation from you; and, by Jupiter, I'll have it too!"

"I—I don't quite understand," said Tommy, striving hard to recover from the shock which the sudden entrance of a man who he thought was dead had given his nerves.

The correspondent gazed on Tommy with fierce contempt.

"You don't understand," he repeated; "well, I'll soon make you, you miserable ruffian, to attempt to put your crimes off on what you believed to be a dead man's shoulders!"

"Surely," muttered Tommy to himself, as he again wiped his forehead, "surely all this is a dream or delusion."

"Oh, no, sir; it's neither; it's downright fact," cried the correspondent. "I'm here all right, and I'm here to have this matter settled. I thought at first that there might be some mistake, but your terror shows that there is none. I want to know, sir, what is the crime you have perpetrated under my name? What is the crime, sir, you have attempted to escape from by putting it on a supposed dead man's shoulders? I demand to be told, sir; and if you don't tell me this very moment, by Jupiter, I'll hand you over to the police!"

While the correspondent was addressing Tommy thus, the young barrister was gradually recovering from his fear; and anger at the language applied to him was rapidly gathering in his bosom. By the time the correspondent's tirade came to an end, Tommy was in a perfect fury.

"Look here," he said, desperately, "I may be wandering in my mind, and you may be a hideous delusion, but I'm blessed if I'll stand any more abuse from anybody. My wife has been here already this morning pitching into me, and now you come calling me a ruffian, and talking about the police. I'll stand no more, I tell you; and anybody or anything that tries it on again will better look out!"

To show that he was in earnest, Tommy divested himself of his coat, and began to roll up his shirt-sleeves.

This demonstration of energy and resentment had a calming effect upon the correspondent. He regarded Tommy for a few moments in silence. Then he spoke.

"Well," he said, speaking in soothing tones, "perhaps, I have spoken too hotly. At any rate, before we come to blows about it, we had better make the point in dispute between us more definite."

"Very well," said Tommy, carelessly, as he proceeded to turn down his sleeves and put on his coat again. "I'm ready for anything. What is it you want?"

"I want an explanation of this," said the correspondent, taking a telegram out of

his pocket. "I suppose you know that just the day before I was to leave the French manoeuvres, I, by some blunder or other, was reported as among those killed by the explosion of an ammunition-waggon. Well, I heard nothing of it till the next day, when I at once telegraphed to old Buffer of the 'Comet' that it was wrong, and that I was starting that evening for England. To my surprise and horror I received this reply." And he handed the telegram he had taken from his pocket to Tommy.

It was from the editor of the "Comet" to the correspondent, and its contents were as follows:

"Everything is discovered. If you come home it will be my duty to have you arrested and tried for your disgraceful crime."

"Well?" said Tommy, when he had read this.

"Well," continued the correspondent, rather awkwardly, "I couldn't understand what he was driving at; so, when I reached Paris, I went to your lodgings to see if you knew anything about it. As you were my double, it occurred to me that it might refer to something you had done. When I reached your Paris lodgings, I found that you had suddenly and unexpectedly left them. That looked suspicious; and, when joined to your terror at seeing me this morning, and other things, I came to the conclusion that you were trying to shield yourself behind me."

"Well, you were mistaken," replied Tommy, sententially.

"What did you do in Paris?" asked the correspondent.

"Nothing—except enjoy myself in a mild way."

"And you cannot explain this telegram?"

"No; no more than I can explain my wife's conduct this morning."

"What?" asked the correspondent, suspiciously, "has she, too, been charging you with a crime?"

"Yes, she has," answered Tommy. "She came here this morning and began talking to me about my being a criminal, and her duty being to inform the police, and all that sort of nonsense. Well, I can stand a good deal of that kind of thing; but still, when you started on the same line, my patience gave way, and I became vexed."

"Hum, yes; quite natural, I suppose," said the correspondent, in a reflective way.

Then, after a pause, he asked Tommy: "Now you're quite sure you did nothing wrong since you went to France with me?"

"Why, hang it!" cried Tommy, angrily, "do you think I'm so much in the habit of committing crimes that one slips out of my memory in a day or two?"

"Well, well!" said the correspondent. "You see from the statements of both your wife and Mr. Buffer, that a crime has been committed; and if it was not committed by you it must have been by somebody else using my name."

"Yes, I suppose so. Unless you committed it yourself."

"Now, now, Smith, don't be vicious," expostulated the correspondent. "I'm sorry if I have hurt your feelings; but you must admit that my mistake was only natural. Let us think no more about it; but devote our attention to the queer behaviour of Buffer and your wife."

Tommy was rather hot-tempered; but no man was ever more appeasable. In his case the old maxim invariably applied, and a soft answer never failed to turn away his wrath. And now the correspondent's apology for having taken him for a criminal was sufficient to restore his good humour. Without further parley he clubbed his wits with his friend's in the most affable way, in order to try and discover what could be at the bottom of Mr. Buffer's telegram and Mrs. Tommy's recriminations.

Their efforts to solve this mystery were not successful. Suggestion after suggestion was made, discussed, and rejected. After an hour or more spent in this way they were as much in the dark as ever.

"Well, well," said Tommy at last, tired of fruitless guessing, "I suppose all we can do is to go to Mr. Buffer and demand an explanation. It may only be a trifle after all. Both my wife and he are a little addicted to exaggeration. They belong to the class that call a common assault blue murder."

"Quite so," replied the correspondent. "I shouldn't be surprised if the whole thing turns out to be merely that they have discovered the fraud we practised upon them."

"I shouldn't be surprised; and from the way my wife behaved I should say that has been discovered."

"I wonder how it came out?" queried the correspondent.

"I don't know," replied Tommy; "but

out it is; and I have a strong suspicion that that's all that's wrong."

"Well, if that is all that's wrong," said the correspondent, with a dogged air, "all I can say is, that there will be trouble. Such a trifle as that is no justification for such a telegram as this. Buffer will have to fork out, I can tell you, if there's nothing more serious than that. I'll go round to the office at once and demand an explanation."

"You certainly should," answered Tommy; "and as I'm more or less implicated, I'll go with you if you like."

"All right; let us start at once. Buffer will just be arriving at the office about this time."

Without further ado the two Messrs. Smith started out, arm-in-arm, to interview the editor, and discover from him the ground of the charges preferred against them.

CHAPTER III.

THE correspondent was right in his guess that the editor would be just reaching the "Comet" office about the time the two Smiths left Tommy's chambers. He had, in fact, just taken his seat in his sanctum when the office-boy announced the correspondent's arrival, and his desire to see Mr. Buffer.

"Send him in at once," said Mr. Buffer.

In a moment the correspondent made his appearance, accompanied by Tommy.

"Good morning," he said to the editor, who surveyed him with a stern countenance. "I have just reached London this morning, and have lost no time in coming to you, with my legal friend here, to demand an explanation of this outrageously libellous telegram of yours." Here he produced the telegram, and laid it on the editor's desk. "I suppose," he added, "you do not deny you despatched it to me?"

"I do not," replied Mr. Buffer, briefly.

"What is your justification for it?" asked the correspondent.

"I have ample justification," replied the editor.

"Tell me it, then," cried the correspondent, angrily. "You say in it, that you will have me arrested and tried on a criminal charge. What is the charge?"

The editor looked in silence on the correspondent for a moment. Then he smiled contemptuously.

"Mr. Smith," he said, "your indignation and ignorance are well acted. You know

what the charge is as well as I do. It is neither more nor less than bigamy!"

"Bigamy!" exclaimed the correspondent, in amazement and horror.

"Yes, bigamy," said the editor.

The correspondent was so astonished that for some moments he knew not what to say. At last he found his tongue.

"Monstrous! absurd!" he exclaimed. "The thing is preposterous—laughable. On what grounds do you dare to make such a charge—so utterly unfounded a charge—against me?"

"On very good grounds, indeed," replied the editor, calmly. "On the statements of the two women who both claim to be your wife, and who have both their marriage certificates to show, in proof of their claim."

The correspondent and Tommy gazed at one another in silent horror.

"It is a foul conspiracy to ruin me!" cried the correspondent, passionately. "It is destitute of even the shadow of a foundation."

"Very well," replied the editor, "you can tell that to the magistrate."

"May I ask," intervened Tommy, "how you came to hear of these two ladies, who claim to be my friend's wives?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Buffer. "When he was reported dead, both came here to make enquiries. They chanced to come just at the same time, heard each other's name, and we had a terrible and most painful scene between them."

"Did they give their addresses?" asked Tommy.

"Yes, they did," replied the editor. "I cannot, just now, give you them exactly; but one came, I remember, from Camberwell, and the other from Norwood."

Tommy, all of a sudden, burst into a roar of laughter. He flung himself into a chair, and holding his sides, shouted with merriment. The editor and correspondent looked on in amazement and indignation.

"Really," said the editor, sternly, "this is a most unseemly exhibition."

"Pardon me, sir," said Tommy, trying to control his laughter, "but, really, I can't help it. Don't you see the joke, Smith?"

"No, I don't," replied the correspondent, sourly.

"Why, man, it was your wife and mine that called. They thought you and I were one person!"

"By Jove! Of course!" exclaimed the correspondent.

"Let me explain the blunder, sir," said

Tommy to the editor. "I wanted a little holiday, without my wife's knowing it. My friend here thought he saw a way of helping me to it. His name happens to be the same as mine—Tom Smith—and when he received your letter appointing him as correspondent, he suggested that I should take it home, show it to my wife, and declare that I was the Tom Smith appointed. I did so; and all went well till the blunder about the explosion. Since then we have both suffered much from explosions of a different kind. Sir, you see the mistake we made. When my friend and I became one, we forgot that our wives remained two, and so that our amalgamation laid us open to a suspicion of bigamy."

At first, the editor was incredulous; but Tommy, by dint of eloquence and the evidence of several acquaintances, convinced him. Mr. Buffer was a kindly, jovial fellow at heart, and not only did he forgive the use that had been made of his letter, but he consented to become peace-maker between the Messrs. Smith and their respective wives. Mrs. Tommy had, as yet, no suspicion of the deception that had been played upon her; and by the editor's advice, she was not enlightened. He telegraphed for her and the correspondent's wife, and explaining that, by some extraordinary blunder, two of his staff who happened to have the same name had become confused together, he introduced the two ladies to their respective husbands. The husbands now, in their turn, put on an injured air, and complained bitterly of their wives' want of charity in believing them capable of such incredible wickedness as bigamy. The poor ladies were quite conscience-stricken, and implored pardon most piteously. After a little hesitation, this was generously granted.

Mr. Tommy Smith has ever since been congratulating himself on his unexpected escape out of an awkward mess, and is resolved never again to indulge in the luxury of a Stolen Holiday.

"SO YOUNG!"

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER I.

TOM ARBUTHNOT hated all letters, especially letters from the women of his family. He said, ungratefully, that there was "so much to read before you got

at anything." And he rarely read them until they had been in his possession for hours, or, sometimes, days. But he did read them, eventually. And this afternoon, as he walked slowly along in the heat, under the cliffs, something reminded him of one which had reached him the night before, forwarded from town, in the handwriting of his married sister, Constance Grant. With a muttered growl that it was sure to be "some commission—the babies, or Grant's last cold," he drew it from his pocket and opened it.

Much of it certainly answered to Tom's curt description; but Mrs. Grant left domestic details alone, on the third sheet, and devoted her remarks to "dear Tom's" own affairs.

"You will take a sisterly warning in good part," her words ran, "and this summer you will not get entangled in any of the 'little affairs' you have so often amused yourself with before—you know how they have set their hearts at home on your marrying Maude Lester, and you have put off proposing to her so long now. I hear there is just now at Bournemouth a very rich widow. That sort of woman is so intensely objectionable, that I need hardly say you will take care of yourself, will you not? and forgive this interference on the part of your affectionate sister,

"CONSTANCE GRANT."

Marry Maude Lester! He should marry Maude Lester when he chose; and many a long day had to come before that happened. He was not at all sure that he ever should choose it. But he was perfectly sure of one thing—that he would not forgive interference from any one, certainly not from his sister.

"Women never can leave a man alone," he said, angrily, as he tore the letter in two pieces, and flung it into the sea.

"Take care of himself!" Did Constance take him for nineteen? If at thirty-one a man could not take care of himself, when could he? And was he likely to think twice about any widow, however rich? A widow! He laughed a short, cynical laugh at the mental picture the words brought before him. He, the young and submissive husband of a woman ten or twenty years his senior, who would, probably, give him allowances of pocket-money, like a good boy. And a background of relations and friends, headed by Constance, all pointing regretfully to a lost paradise with Maude Lester!

Oh, it was very likely! Why Constance must be in her second childhood.

Irritation made Tom walk at a rather quicker pace than before; and, as he discovered this fact, he was struck by the idea that it was quite possible to take air and repose at one and the same time. So he took off his blue serge jacket, rolled it up, and laid it in a shady corner of a little rocky cove, to which his aimless walk had led him; then he laid himself full length on the sand, with his head on his jacket, and gave himself up to reflection. He could just see the people in the distance walking up and down the long pier. It was five o'clock, and he ought to have been there, too, if he wished to be counted among the fashionable visitors, who, at that hour, on that spot, devoted all their energies nominally, to inhaling sea-breezes for the benefit of their constitutions; actually, to retailing the gossip of the place for the benefit of their friends; scrutinising, meanwhile, if the scrutiniser were a man, the face; if a woman, the gown; of every newcomer.

Tom Arbuthnot, from lazily thinking how much better off he was than if he had been sharing these duties, had gradually drifted into that placid state which precedes sleep, when life is presented to one's eyes as a long, unbroken calm, where worries have no place, and thence into a deep, tranquil sleep, when the calm was suddenly broken, and hard reality forced on him again.

His shoulder was being shaken, rather gently; that his sleepy senses discovered first. Then he woke enough to look up, confusedly, and then he thought he was still dreaming, for he saw a woman's face bending over him, and became aware that the hand on his shoulder was a woman's hand, and a clear, rather hesitating, girlish voice was saying:

"I ought to beg your pardon for my roughness, but I was walking by myself, and saw you, and I could not go on and leave you asleep. Do you know the tide is coming in fast, and it always fills this cove?"

"What?" said Tom, vaguely, at first. Then, as the meaning of her words came clearly into his mind, he sprang to his feet. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, abruptly, "I've been pretty near drowning then. How can I thank you?" he began, earnestly, turning round to face the woman he had as yet scarcely seen. But she, simply saying,

"There is nothing to thank me for; you

will find the cliff path quickest," turned round, bowed distantly, and was half-way up the winding path before Tom Arbuthnot had recovered his self-possession.

The recovery was not hastened by the fact that he remembered the state of his dress, or, rather, undress. He thought ruefully of his shirt-sleeves, and of his hair—ruffled, sandy, and tangled.

"It can't be helped though," he said, finally, philosophically.

And then he began to think of what was more interesting—the woman who had come before his eyes for a moment, and vanished like one of his dreams. It must have been a dream after all. No; certainly it was not. Her face came back to him in the curious clearness with which sudden impressions reassert themselves sometimes. She had been dark; very dark, and small. He was sure of that. Dressed in white, too, with something bright and shining at the waist—buckles, perhaps; and very large, dark eyes. Young she was, certainly, very; though Tom could hardly have said how he knew that so well.

He had been standing all this time with one arm in his jacket and one out. Now he flung it on, with an impulse to go up the cliff and catch her up.

Up the cliff he went, stopping once, about half-way, to see how fast the tide was coming in, and how soon, if his "woman in white" had not come by, his cove would have been reached, and he himself—but Tom did not dwell on the thought; he gave a short, involuntary shiver, and went on faster still. But nowhere on his way up, nowhere at the top of the cliff, could he catch one glimpse of the little dark woman in the white gown who had awoke him twenty minutes before.

"I say, Arbuthnot, a precious lively companion you are! If you've said one word in the last quarter of an hour it's as much as ever you have; and you've left me to see after the boat in this heat! What's come to you?"

Tom Arbuthnot, thus accosted, pulled himself together, left off gazing over the sea and said, vaguely, that he "was thinking."

"Thinking!" returned his friend, very scornfully; "that's just what you weren't doing. Dreaming, if you like! What is it? Who is she?"

Tom's face flushed under the bronzed tint which sea-breezes had given it; but

he was not going to say to Tenterden, that he, Tom Arbuthnot, thirty-one years old, and thoroughly case-hardened, as he would two days ago have declared, had fallen in love with a woman's face which he had seen for one instant, and that when he was three parts awake only.

It was true, though; he knew it was.

For the last two days he had never once lost sight, mentally, of the sweet, dark face which had leant over his for that moment; had never lost the ring of that girlish voice in his ears. And, what was more, he had not been able to find her, or to find out in the least who she was likely to be.

It was all too ridiculous! He would put an end to such boyish romance! At any rate, Tenterden should not know; though most of the facts relating to Tom's former love-passages were in that gentleman's possession, for they had continued a pretty close boyish friendship into their maturer years. So he answered deliberately and untruthfully:

"Oh, nothing. My father's beginning to want pressing to hand out anything, that's all."

"Rubbish!" said the experienced Tenterden. "I don't believe it was that a bit. But, old fellow, if you truly are hard up, you'd better go in for that rich widow they're talking about over there," jerking his elbow lazily in the direction of the town they had left behind them, which lay shining brilliantly in the afternoon sun, where it was not overshadowed by its patches of dark fir-trees.

"I! Am I likely to want to go in for any widow?" said Tom, contemptuously, with a scornful recollection of his sister's letter. "Not if I know it—thank you."

"But, I say," Tenterden went on, from the bottom of the boat, where he was now comfortably established with a cigar, while Tom held the tiller and looked after the sail. "I say, she's not so old, you know. I've not seen her; but I heard that; and I heard that she was not bad-looking. And there really is lots of money, without any nonsense. She was only married a year, and the old boy died and left her all. Some condition attached. I don't know what, though. I don't think any one does."

"What's her name?" said Tom.

"An odd name; I've forgotten. No, I remember. Julius, it is—Mrs. Julius. She doesn't go out very much; lives, or is staying on the South Cliff, I believe. My

sisters met her chaperoning some girl to a concert lately."

"And they told you she was 'not so old,' and 'not bad-looking'? Don't you know what that means from one woman about another, Charlie? Fifty, if she's a day, and plainly so. Probably a decided squint, and evidently made up. It's only under those circumstances that the dear creatures ever praise one another."

But Tom made, as he said the words, so strong and fierce a mental reservation in favour of the woman of whom he knew nothing but the outline of her face, that it found physical expression in a hasty jerk to the cord he was paying out to the sail, which jerk drew down upon him a few short, strong words from Tenterden. But he did not hear them. A sudden thought had seized him. He had an invitation for a dance that night in town. It was only July, and much of the world was still left there, pretending to enjoy the fag end of the season. When he came down to the sea-side he had tossed the card away, and said he was sick of dances; but now he thought he would rush up to it. Yes, certainly. Some of the pretty women he was sure to meet would drive this tormenting nonsense out of his head. Other faces, quite as pretty, would take that haunting dark one from before his eyes. Maude Lester would be there. He would please his people and get rid at once of this nonsense, and of the suggestions and warnings of friends and relations, by asking her to bestow her twenty-eight years, her handsome face and figure, and her two thousand a year, upon his restless, idle self. He would, to-night, and it would all be settled. Tenterden might as well come too, if he liked. The Mortimers were sure to be glad of dancing men. So he turned, with a characteristically impulsive movement, to Tenterden, and proposed to him that they should at once make for that part of the shore nearest to his hotel, and catch the evening express.

Tenterden was far too accustomed to Tom Arbutnot's erratic ways to show any surprise. He assented to the proposal with some eagerness—fishing and sailing are delights which, after ten days, need variety to give them their full zest—and roused himself at once, even going so far as to suggest to Tom that they should row in, as the wind was dropping fast.

Half-past eleven found both men in Mrs. Mortimer's rooms. They were not by any

means crowded, but they were very hot; and the curious contrast between the heat, the dazzling lights, and tired, worried-looking faces, and the fresh air, brilliant sunlight, and wide landscape Tom had been enjoying a few hours earlier, made him feel as if one or the other scene must be unreal, and wonder at the same time which was his real self—the self which had all the afternoon, in a kind of framework of deep blue sky and sunny cliffs, seen nothing, thought of nothing, but one haunting brown face with its dark eyes; or the self which looked by no means longingly round the large rooms for Maude Lester.

But just at this moment Maude Lester was nowhere to be seen; and, with a sigh like that of a man who has a short reprieve granted him, he went up to a girl whom he had seen when he first came in—a Miss Morrison. Tom knew her very well; they were in the same set, and met pretty constantly. She was engaged, too, to one of his own oldest friends. He asked her for the next dance she had to spare—it happened to be the very next—and she and Tom were in a few moments talking over all that had happened in the three weeks which had passed since the whirl of society had last thrown them together, and enumerating all those incidents, so small in themselves, which turn days into weeks, and weeks into years, in the high pressure which we are fond of calling pleasure.

"So you weren't at Mary Emerson's wedding last week?" she said, as they walked up and down near a conservatory window, trying to catch a breath of the July night air, which was coolness itself compared to that of the rooms inside. "Oh no; how stupid of me! You were not in town, of course. Didn't you say when I saw you last that you were going to Bournemouth?"

"Yes; I only came up for this, and shall go back to-morrow. I like the place; it's not hot, as every one warned me it would be, and not full, just now."

"Have you come across a cousin of mine there, I wonder—a Mrs. Julius? She was there last week—at least, she has a house there; but I know she's in town now for a day or two. She came on Thursday to take her little sister back with her to Bournemouth, and I fancy she's here to-night. I've not seen her yet; but she told me she was coming. I think you'd like her. She's clever, and very

bright. A widow, she is; but not old, you know."

"No, I have not met Mrs. Julius," said Tom—refraining with some difficulty from adding thereto: "When am I to hear the last of the woman?"—"but I've heard her name mentioned."

"Oh, you would, of course. She's not been there long, but she is sure to be popular soon; only she is so retiring—shy, I should say if she were a girl only—oh, there is my sister looking for me. Will you take me to her, Mr. Arbuthnot?"

Tom took her across the room, and then crossed resolutely to the corner where he had just caught sight of Maude Lester's white shoulders and pink and white face. He had nearly reached her; her face bore an anticipatory smile of welcome for his greeting; when, suddenly—in thinking of it afterwards it was to him as if the whole scene had risen from the earth—on his right hand, in a recess, against some heavy dark draperies and ferns, he saw a lady sitting in a low chair, alone. She was dressed in soft white, and the picture she made was so good that he gave another look. Something flashed at her waist. Her face was dark—her eyes were dark, too—and—yes, it was the face which had never left him since his eyes rested on it three days before.

Maude Lester; the dance; the place where he was; everything went out of Tom Arbuthnot's head. He went straight up to the low chair, and said, abruptly: "I've been looking for you ever since. I wanted to thank you—for—waking me. I—I must introduce myself. My name is Arbuthnot. I—hope you'll let me call and thank you again."

She had recognised Tom at once, and a slight flush had crept over her face during his incoherent speech; but it did not in the least disturb the self-possession with which she said:

"I did nothing, really, to be thanked for. I wonder if you are the Mr. Arbuthnot of whom I have heard my cousin, Miss Morrison, speak. Do you live in Kensington?"

"Miss Morrison and I are very old friends," Tom answered, quickly. "I have just had the pleasure of dancing with her."

"Oh, do ask her to come into this room, if you come across her again. I must wait here for the present, and I want to see her." Then, giving her hand

to Tom with a pretty, unusual kind of formal graciousness, she said: "I shall be very pleased to see you at my house when you are in Bournemouth again. It is on the South Cliff. I am Mrs. Julius."

CHAPTER II.

It was a remarkable little drawing-room—remarkable because it contained none of the Indian and Japanese curiosities with which people so often, nowadays, seem to think it necessary to make their rooms look more like a mixed and ill-arranged museum than anything else. The only colours in it were two shades of terra-cotta, and a few pieces of Salviati glass were almost the only ornaments. There were engravings and water-colours on the walls, and on the wide, low mantelshelf were arranged a quantity of photographs. They were of all sizes—cassettes, cabinet, and very small ones—and one inspection would have shown that they were all of the same people: a man with grey hair; a woman, not young, with a sweet, worn face; two boys, who looked about twenty, in the latest edition of their photographs; a girl about seventeen; and a tiny child, with a face very like, even in its still babyish beauty, the face of the woman who was sitting in a low chair by one of the windows. The dark venetian blind was let down to keep out the sunny afternoon glare; but it was not tightly closed, and between its bars gleams of the sunlight, which was sparkling on the blue sea outside, crept in and sparkled on Mrs. Julius's hair, catching all the red lights in the dark brown—a brown so dark that it looked black in the distance. An open letter lay in her lap; but she was not reading it. Her hands were on it. They were very small and brown, almost childish in their shape, and the wedding-ring she wore looked strange on that little left hand.

"So young!" people said of her, when they heard her story and saw her first.

"So young and so pretty," old Mr. Julius had thought, when, four years before, he had come back from India, seen his old friend Mansel's eldest daughter, and, after a fortnight's acquaintance, asked her to marry him. Susie Mansel, at seventeen, had no stronger incentive than that of pleasing her father, who was very happy to give his "pretty little girl" to his old friend. So she had consented, and had made Mr. Julius very happy, too; and when, only a year after their marriage, he

was suddenly killed by a fall in the hunting-field, his young wife had missed his constant, thoughtful care and protection terribly, at first.

The sunlight crept faster and faster through the blind, down from Mrs. Julius's hair to her soft white frock, the buckles at her waist, and, finally, to her little brown hands. A smile, a slow, happy smile came over her face, and she took up the letter which laid on her lap and read it again.

It was from her mother; and a picture of her sweet, careworn face came to her daughter's eyes as she read the delicate, rather old-fashioned handwriting.

"I am thinking so of you and Cassy," the letter ran, "I must write you a line to say this, and to tell you that I had a letter from Cheltenham, from Nellie, this morning. She says she is most happy, thoroughly happy; she seems so, indeed, and has taken an excellent place. She deserved it, I am sure, after all her hard work, poor child! And she says I am to tell you—she cannot, she says—how grateful she is to you, Susie, for sending her. I cannot express it to you, any more than the child herself; but, though I can say so little, you do know, my child, how I feel, how we all feel, to you for the good things you have brought into our lives—all you have done for us."

Mrs. Julius laid the letter down again, and the smile deepened on her face. She was wondering if any one was so happy as she was; if any one else could be so fortunate as to have enough, more than enough money, to do exactly the things they most wished to do. Her mind wandered vaguely over the last three years. She felt again her father's touch on her shoulder when he told her what it had been to him to send his eldest son to his own old college at Cambridge, which he never could have hoped to do but for her; and her young and favourite brother's curly head seemed to brush against her cheek again, as she remembered the hot summer morning when he had hugged her till she was nearly breathless, and told her that he would, indeed, make her glad some day that she had sent him to Woolwich, like the very best of sisters, as she was! No one could have had so many happy times as she had! And there was so much that she was going to do in the future, too. For a long time she had meant to take a better house for them all, instead of that dreary little suburban villa. She would

say nothing to her father until it was all arranged, and then he could not object. Her mother should know, and she would help her. Oh, it would be delightful. And then, some day, very far in the distance, between them they would make her father retire from his hard work. He need never find out how he came into possession of enough money. They might perhaps make him believe it was a legacy. It would be splendid! She was, surely, the very happiest woman in the world.

She folded her mother's letter again, and was putting it into the envelope with a gentle, loving sort of touch, when the door opened suddenly after an odd, impatient twist at its handle, and a tiny child, about six years old, with a face very like Mrs. Julius's own, only browner, merrier, rounder, dashed across the room, and jumped into her sister's lap, with one of those pretty, graceful movements so fascinating to watch in some children.

"I'm so tired, Susie," said the little, high-pitched voice. "You brought me home so late last night; but I can't go to sleep in your room when it's not bedtime. Let me go to sleep here."

"No, you naughty girl, not here. Some one might come in, you know, and you would be waked up. Let me carry you back again," said Susie, with a rather anxious look at the tired eyes. Cassy was a fragile little mortal, in spite of her round, brown face.

"No, no; I shan't go to sleep, then. I don't want to stay there. I'm going to be with you, and you'll tell me a story till I've found a dream. I won't be in your lap though, it's too sunny. I'll be on the footstool."

And the brown scrap scrambled down, and, after fidgeting for about three minutes, settled her curly head against Susie's white frock.

Susie said no more. She was very anxious that the child should rest, and thought it unlikely that any one would call that afternoon; so, laying her hand lovingly on the rough hair, she began in a low voice to tell Cassy a story, a fairy story of Hans Andersen's; the pathos underlying its beauty touched Susie and crept unconsciously into her voice. It grew lower and more soothing, and when she ended, no childish voice commented or responded. Cassy was sound asleep; so sound asleep that the sudden opening of the door ten minutes later did not disturb her,

nor did the maid's announcement of "Mr. Arbuthnot."

As Tom came across the room, Mrs. Julius held out her hand to him with a pretty dark flush on her face.

"You'll forgive my not getting up," she said. "I'm very anxious not to wake my little sister. I brought her down rather late from town yesterday; she is over-tired, and a little delicate."

"Am I disturbing you?" Tom Arbuthnot asked. "Shall I come another day?"

There was much generosity contained in that short sentence, considering that Tom had been watching the clock since twelve for the earliest hour at which he could reasonably call on Mrs. Julius; and it met its reward when she said:

"Oh, no; Cassy will not wake, I think; and you will excuse so informal a reception? I was more informal the other day, when I shook you! Our acquaintance seems fated to be unceremonious."

"I wish I knew how to thank you," said Tom, with no echo of her laugh in his voice.

"Don't thank me. Indeed, it's wholly unnecessary," she returned. "That subject is exhausted, Mr. Arbuthnot. How did you like the Mortimers' dance the other night?"

"I—oh—it was very hot, wasn't it?" said Tom, vaguely.

All his recollections of the evening being concentrated on the one moment when he had suddenly met Mrs. Julius, his judgement of it as a whole, was likely to be at fault.

"Yes, it was hot. Too hot for dances. But the Mortimers are very old friends of mine; and I had promised, if I was in town, to chaperon a girl to it. So I had to go, as I went up the day before to fetch this child," and she stroked the brown hair again, gently.

"She is your sister?" Tom said, with a curiosity which he found it difficult to keep in polite bounds, so anxious was he to know more of the woman who had since the day, a week before, when she so suddenly appeared to him, been his only thought and dream.

"Yes. My youngest sister. My people live at Dulwich. Are you fond of children?" she said, breaking off abruptly, to Tom's disappointment.

"Yes, very," he answered.

He would have said so whether it was true or not, it is to be feared. But it was true. He was one of those men who are

attracted to little children, by some unaccountable sympathy, which the children themselves best understand, and instantly feel.

He had spoken in a rather louder tone than before, and Cassy moved, slowly opened her brown eyes, and gave him a long inspection without moving; then suddenly got up, went across to Tom, put her hand in his, and, turning to her sister:

"I like him, Susie," she explained.

Before Tom rose to go, Cassy had arranged for the two various expeditions along the shore, to all of which Tom assented eagerly, with not one moment's thought of Tenterden's comments, should they meet him in the intervals of shrimping, seaweed-gathering, and so forth.

"Then shall I call for Cassy on Friday afternoon?" were Tom's last words to Mrs. Julius, as he stood holding her little brown hand in his a minute longer than he need have done.

She drew it away gently, and took Cassy into her arms. There was a very faint flush on her cheeks, and before she could answer him, Cassy cried out:

"Of course he'll call for me. I'm too small to call for him, don't you think, Susie?"

Mrs. Julius sat by the window in her low chair, waiting for Tom Arbuthnot to bring Cassy home to tea.

Their first expedition, on Friday, had proved so successful, that it had been quickly followed by another. Cassy, having begged hard "to catch a fish" herself, Tom bethought himself of some pools which contained chiefly crabs and sea-anemones, which he painted in somewhat glowing colours to her as "beautiful fishes," and the two set out together in pursuit of them. But he had promised to bring her in at half-past four, and it was past five now.

Susie got up, and looked out rather wonderingly. There was no trace of them along the dazzlingly white cliff road. Yes, there was—that was Mr. Arbuthnot, surely. Susie had not been mistaken in either his figure or his walk. It was he. But he was carrying Cassy! Why? Was the child tired, or—Susie's mind instantly jumped to the conclusion—hurt? She ran down the steps, and stood at the garden-gate, long before they could have reached it. It seemed ages to her before they did reach it, and the childish voice said:

"I'm not hurt, Susie—only my foot; and Mr. Arbuthnot's carried me all the way!"

But Susie hardly looked reassured, even when Tom added:

"Indeed, she has only twisted her foot. May I carry her in and lay her down, then I'll explain!"

He did not wait for her consent, but laid Cassy on the sofa, and began to take off her shoe as gently as any woman could have done.

Mrs. Julius stood still for one moment, then sent for no servants, but rushed downstairs herself, brought cold water and a sponge, and, kneeling on the opposite side of the sofa to Mr. Arbuthnot, bathed the tiny foot while he held it for her in a firm, gentle grasp.

"Indeed, I think it's only a bad twist," said Tom, reassuringly. "We haven't told you yet how it happened, have we, Cassy?"

"No; you say," said Cassy, languidly. "She had her foot wedged, I think, between two rocks, when I called to her to come to me"—"I was catching such a pretty fish then," put in Cassy; "only he was so slippery"—"and she turned suddenly, gave it a twist, and fell."

"Yes," said Susie, without looking up.

Her eyes were fixed on the little brown head, which, after moving restlessly on the sofa pillow, laid quite still at last now. Cassy gave several sighs of satisfaction, and said in an exhausted little voice:

"There; you're both clever. You've mended it, nearly."

"Shall I get a doctor to look in, and just see if it's a sprain or not?" said Tom Arbuthnot, looking up at the woman whose soft hair had almost brushed his forehead, whose hands for the last ten minutes had been so very near his own that it had been all he could do to control himself, and prevent himself from taking those two little hands tightly into his own.

"Oh yes; will you?" said she, rising slowly. "I think it's nothing to hurt; but one always likes to be certain." For an instant she caught at the mantelpiece as if for support. "I—I think it startled me a little—just a very little—when you came in just now," she said, hesitatingly. "It's very foolish, and I'm all right; but——"

But Tom impulsively put his arm round her, and put her into a chair by the sofa.

"Why do you try to stand?" he said, gently. "Of course it startled you. Sit still and take care of Cassy; and I'll send

the doctor—to mend you quite, Cassy!" with a laughing look at the child.

When he was gone Susie sat where he had placed her, without moving, except to slip her hand into the child's. An odd thrill went through her. His touch had given her a curious feeling unlike anything she had ever known before. It was different, quite different from any other touch. Why was it like that? Why would she have liked him to go on holding her? She felt shaken—more so than by Cassy's accident, even—and when Tom Arbuthnot came, quite late the same evening, to ask after Cassy once more, the sound of his voice made the colour suddenly rush in waves over her face; but it faded quickly, to leave a face so very white that Tom said, anxiously, when he saw it:

"You yourself are more hurt than Cassy, I'm afraid."

"No, I'm not," she said, smiling faintly, "only tired; and what does that matter? Cassy is all right. The doctor says it's only a twist. Oh—thank you so much for going to him."

Tom could not help it. Her white face he dared not kiss; but one of her hands lay in her lap. He took it in his, gave it a kiss which felt burning, almost, to her, and said, in a low, choked voice:

"What does it matter? Don't you know how much everything about you matters to me?" Then, as he saw her astonished face, he said, hurriedly: "I am an idiot. Forgive me. I'll tell you what I mean—I'll ask you everything to-morrow. May I?" But before she could find words to answer him he was gone.

Outside in the moonlight, in his quick, hurried walk home, Tom told himself that he was senseless. What had he done? Spoiled all his chance by his hastiness? Very likely. But he could not have helped it. No man could, who loved her and saw her then. So perfectly sweet she looked, with the white, tired, almost childish face turned upwards, and the soft dark hair falling loosely round it.

Oh, how was he to get through the time until to-morrow morning? Why, why hadn't he told her everything then—told her—but his thoughts were suddenly interrupted by finding Tenterden in his room smoking a cigar and waiting for him.

"I want you to come out for a moonlight row, old fellow," was Tenterden's greeting. "They said you'd be in directly, so I waited."

"Harg moonlight rows!" was Tom's peculiarly cordial response to this.

Whereon Tenterden put down his cigar, and, crossing over to Tom, who had flung himself into a low chair, stood before him, scrutinising him with an odd look on his face.

"Come, Tom," he said, at last, "let me hear about it, old boy. I knew there was something up. It's so many days since I saw you; and I was sure of it the other day, too. Is it Mrs. Julius herself? I hear you've found her out. Shelton saw you go into her house. What's she like, now?"

"What's she like! Oh — Tenterden, since you know, you may as well hear. Do you think there's any hope for me? Do you think I've made a fool of myself? Will she listen to me again?"

To all of which Tenterden gravely responded that, till he knew the circumstances, he was hardly in a position to judge whether Tom had made a fool of himself. He thought it rather likely. And then he went and sat down again and lit a fresh cigar, while Tom, with his hands behind his head, and his gaze fixed on the ceiling, told him, in short, jerky sentences, all there was to tell.

When he stopped at last—more for want of breath than anything else—Tenterden said:

"It's a case of waiting for to-morrow, simply, as far as I can see. Uncertainty, we all know, is trying; but——" then, with a look at Tom's earnest, anxious face, he changed his cynical tone to one of real sympathy as he said:

"You know I wish you good luck, old fellow, seeing it's gone so far as this; and it seems, truly, as if it were a reasonable wish enough, this time. Meanwhile, hope for the best; and don't you think that a moonlight row might, after all, prove a diversion?"

On consideration, it seemed to Tom as if anything that helped him to get through the next twelve hours would be welcome; and the two men strolled slowly down to the beach, past Mrs. Julius's house, where a bright light was burning in one of the higher windows.

It was Susie's own room; and she was kneeling by Cassy's bed, stroking her hair as she slept, and wondering, wondering very much, why she was so happy, so very happy. He had said he should come to-morrow. He would come and tell her — what! That he loved her! She knew that

was what he meant to tell her; and she hid her burning face beside Cassy's brown one, in the soft, white pillow. Oh, she was happy; happier than she had ever been in her life. Was every one happy—more than happy, like this, when some one loved them; and—she felt her face grow more burning still—they loved! For she did love him. She knew she did; she had known it, she was sure now, before he said those quick, hurried words to-night, before he kissed her hand like that. She laid it under her face as the remembrance of his kiss came back to her. She loved him; oh, yes, she loved him! And to-morrow he was coming to tell her he loved her—to ask her to marry him!

But as Susie said the last words, low and lingeringly, under her breath, a sudden flash of remembrance came to her, which made her get up all at once from her kneeling position and walk to the window.

Cassy moved uneasily in her sleep; Susie neither heeded nor heard. What were the words which were ringing in her ears indistinctly! No; they were growing more and more distinct every instant—"to my wife, Susan Julius, unless the said Susan Julius shall marry again, when——"

When had she heard them! Oh, she remembered. She remembered even the hot heavy feeling of the crape she had worn that day, as the words all came back; and she remembered what they meant. How carefully her father had explained it all! If she married again, everything would go to some one else—to Harold Julius in India. She would have nothing then; no more money of her own to help them all with; no, none. Everything would be different for them.

With a curious precision she went through every detail: Nellie would have to come back; the boys must come away for good. She could never take that better house for them all. Her father couldn't retire; he must work, and work. It must all be hard and dreary for them again. Oh, no—no! It could not be! She could not ever marry.

But then—and with a low, sobbing cry, Susie sank down on to a chair, and laid her head on the window-sill—then, when Mr. Arbuthnot came to-morrow, she must tell him—when he asked her to marry him—that he must go away; that he must leave her. She could never marry him, never see him any more.

Oh!—and she loved him; she loved him so. She knew it all so well now. It

seemed as if half her life would go away with him. She could not send him away.

No; it was not right that she should make herself so very wretched. And what right had she to spoil his life? It could not be right. She would say "Yes" to Tom Arbuthnot; and for her people, hope for the best. After all, it was not her duty, strictly speaking, to do all that for them.

Susie raised her head, and looked out over the grey, dull sea. It was the darkest hour of the night, just before dawn; but the stars were brilliant, and she could see the outline of the cliffs and the restless waves. Their low, moaning sound, which came through the half-closed window, in some way or other accorded with an uneasiness which was taking the place of her last thought. If she did that—if she tried to put all thought of her people away, and said "Yes," to Mr. Arbuthnot—would she be happy? Would she be able to make him happy?

Oh, what must she do? What could she do? Surely something would come to alter all this for her. It was all so dreadful; and she was so young. If she sent him away she would have to live so long without Tom—without him—without him.

The waves seemed to echo the words as her shaking voice said them, low and miserably; and, after listening for a moment to their moaning, Susie laid her head on her arms and broke into bitter sobs.

She was too exhausted when they ceased at last, to think or even cry any more. She undressed slowly, and wondering vaguely and wretchedly, first, how she should tell Mr. Arbuthnot, then, what she should tell him, she fell asleep.

She was quite alone in the drawing-room, working, next morning, when Tom Arbuthnot was shown in. Her face was white, but she was perfectly self-possessed outwardly.

"Cassie is gone out," she began, trying to talk in an ordinary, usual tone; but how was it possible, if her heart would beat so? "She had to go out in a perambulator, to her great disgust. She suggested every other kind of conveyance, from a wheelbarrow to a victoria, before she consented, and she was only consoled by my promising to take her out for a row this afternoon, and to go and meet her now."

"But you needn't go directly?" Tom asked, anxiously. "You'll let me speak

to you first—Mrs. Julius—Susie—I can't help knowing your name, you know—you must know what I want to say. I've loved you ever since that day when I saw you first, from that moment—I have, indeed. And—well, it's utterly useless to say how I love you; but if you could love me, the least little bit—— Oh, my darling, can't you?"

Susie did not look up. Her eyes were fixed on the ground, where the morning sunlight was dancing backwards and forwards.

"Susie," he said, anxiously, as she did not answer, "will you marry me? Could you love me?"

"I—I—oh, I do," she said, at last, very low and faintly. Then she broke off suddenly. "What am I saying?" she cried. "I—I can't, Mr. Arbuthnot—I can't, I can't, indeed!"

"Can't!" he echoed, blankly. He stood for a moment or two, silently looking at her, and then said, gently: "But why? Won't you tell me why, at least?"

"Oh, I cannot; don't ask me," she said.

"You do love me?" Tom asked her, coming a step nearer.

"Yes." Then, for a moment throwing every other thought away, forgetting everything, as she looked at his face, she stretched out her hands to him, and he took her into his arms—the arms that were ready to hold and keep her for ever. But she instantly drew herself away again, saying, with a voice she vainly tried to steady "Oh, don't, don't, because it makes it worse. Indeed, I—I can't;" and she covered her face with her hands.

Tom took them gently away.

"Makes what worse?" he said. "Tell me, my darling." Then, as she did not speak, he changed his tone altogether, for one not of entreaty, but of insistence. "You must tell me what you mean," he said. "Remember, you have said enough to give me a right to say this."

She looked up at him, then hid her face for one moment, and said in a very low, strained voice:

"I love you with all my heart, but I never thought—oh, I never thought, till last night, that if I marry I can't help them at home. I shall have none of this money then, and—they do want it so. They couldn't do without. Oh, what can I do?"

Tom had taken both her hands in his, and she did not draw them away.

"My darling," he said, very low, "think what you are saying to me. Think what

my life would be without you. I love you. How can I give you up?"

"Do you think it is nothing to me," she said, "to tell you this?" and a shiver ran through her whole frame; "but I must—I must."

"No—you shall not. Oh, my darling, my love, you cannot say you will not come to me?"

His voice grew passionate. Susie threw herself down on a couch and buried her face in its cushions.

"Go away, now," she said, in a low voice. "Go—and give me time. I must have time. I'll tell you this evening. Go, and let me think." She lifted her face as she said the last words. It was white, drawn, and strained. "Go!" she said.

Tom went across the room; but when he had nearly reached the door he came back. She had risen; he took the trembling slight form into his arms, and kissed the white forehead passionately again and again.

"Oh, my love, say 'Yes' to me this evening!" he cried. Then he turned and left her alone.

For a long time she did not move. Suddenly she crossed the room quickly to the mantelpiece; and, leaning her arms on it, looked at her mother's photograph—at the sweet, thin, careworn face of the mother who had said so often to Susie: "You've taken the care out of my life, child, and made me very happy."

Could she let her go back to that weary struggle to make both ends meet? And her father—and the boys. Why were they all looking at her like this? She could not—she would not; and she grasped the velvet-covered mantelshelf with both hands. No, she would not alter their lives. All those dear faces should never look at her in any way but with happiness in them. She would tell Tom Arbuthnot to-night, when she came home, that he must go away. Her hands tightened on the mantelshelf as Cassy's tiny voice said, behind her:

"You never come to meet me, Susie. And now it's lunch time, and Sarah's had to carry me down."

She took Cassy from the maid's arms into her own. Yes; Cassy's life should be very happy—all their lives should, whatever her own might be. And she kissed the little forehead so passionately that Cassy's brown eyes looked up surprised, and she said:

"I've not hurted myself any worse, Susie; but you've remembered about the

boat! You'll lift me in it, won't you? Not a sailor; they're all so tall."

Susie hardly heard her. A curious kind of numb, unconscious feeling was creeping over her. Only one thought was in her mind. It was to-night that she must tell Tom Arbuthnot to go away. To-night, in only a few hours, she must send him away; say good-bye to him; see him go, never to come back. To-morrow she must begin the first of those terrible days without him, which were to last all her life. All her life! And it would be so long; she was so young. Could no one help her? Could nothing save her? The very sea looked dazzlingly hard and cold as she carried Cassy down to the boat. It was all hard, all cold. It would be like that always. To-night he would go. All her life! Oh, it could not be true! Yes, it was. All her life—could nothing save her?

It was six o'clock. Tom Arbuthnot stood on the cliffs waiting for the return of the boat which he had watched from the same spot when it started three hours before. They were having a long row, surely. There was a boat coming round the pier now; but that was not it. They had only one boatman; in this boat there were two. Why were the people crowding so near the pier? What was the coastguard saying? "An accident."

An accident! With a terrible, undefinable feeling, Tom rushed down the cliff-path to the shore. They were lifting some one—something—out of the boat. Every one seemed to move aside, and Tom took the slight form into his own arms, and carried it up the cliff, home, to the little room where he had held her in his arms that morning.

When all hope was found to be in vain, and they had laid her down beside Cassy, Tom stood looking at the two faces. He thought of the agonised look which Susie's face had worn when he left her that morning, and he was soothed—even through his utter, wordless desolation—by the perfect content and peace which shone there now.

THAT STRANGE MRS. CHALGRAVE.

By T. W. SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

It was the morning of the fifth of August. Austin Chalgrave and his wife were seated at breakfast, the former

skimming the letters and papers which the post had just brought him, and chatting to his wife by fits and starts between times. To Mrs. Chalgrave the post had brought nothing—it never did bring her anything, unless it were a tradesman's circular now and again—which, in view of the fact that from the date of her arrival at Dene Park she had never been known to write to any one, was perhaps hardly to be wondered at.

"Here's my annual invitation from Gilstead," said Mr. Chalgrave, as he tossed a note across the table to his wife. "Read it, and then tell me in what terms I'm to answer it."

The note in question ran as under :

"The Briery,

"August 4th.

"DEAR CHALGRAVE,—I shall look for you on the Twelfth as usual, although you have deserted the Honourable Corps of Bachelors—traitor that you are! The birds are plentiful, and strong on the wing, and I anticipate capital sport. Milward, and Denvers, and Protheroe will make up the party. Sincerely yours,

"JOHN GILSTEAD."

"You must go, of course," said Mrs. Chalgrave, as she passed the note back to her husband.

"But it will be awfully lonely for you while I'm away."

"I shall contrive to amuse myself somehow, no doubt, and the time will soon pass. Where was it I read the other day that if married people were wise, they would contrive little absences from each other now and again? Why should not you and I be wise in that fashion?"

"Look here, Francie," said Chalgrave, more earnestly than he had yet spoken, "you have only to say the word, and I will write Gilstead by the next post, declining his invitation."

"Indeed, and indeed, no such word will be said by me. The idea of such a thing! Did you not tell me, before we were married, how you have never missed once for twelve years going to your friend Gilstead's for a fortnight's shooting; and with what eagerness you always look forward to it?"

"That was all very well while I was single; but things are different now. It would be all right if I could take you with me; but I can't. Gilly's a confirmed misogynist, and to see a petticoat under

his roof would, I verily believe, send him into a fit."

"My dear Austin, you must, and shall go," retorted his wife, with emphasis. "Because you have been foolish enough to marry, is that any reason why you should be tied to your wife's apron-string? Indeed, sir, I won't have any such thing said of you."

"If I go, as you seem to insist upon my doing, you must have Aunt Pell to stay with you while I am away."

"Is that really necessary?"

"Why, certainly. The proprieties must be strictly attended to. I should have all the Mrs. Grundys in the county crying shame upon me, if I were to leave my charming young wife without some responsible person to take care of her—fully competent though I know her to be to take care of herself."

Mrs. Chalgrave's clear, bell-like laugh rang through the room.

"Only to think, Austin, in view of what you and I know, that it should be deemed necessary for Aunt Pell to take charge of me during your absence!"

"But then, as it happens, dear, the world at large doesn't know what you and I know," he answered, drily. "In any case, you and the old lady will get on comfortably enough together."

"Oh, yes. She's a dear old soul; and although, of course, she and I have very little in common, we shall not disagree, I promise you. I shall have got my morning gallop over before she is downstairs. We shall dawdle through the forenoon as best we can. After luncheon I shall drive her out in the basket carriage; not for a thousand pounds would she venture on a spin with me in the dog-cart. After dinner, when she has had her nap, we shall play bézique, at which she will make awful mistakes, which I shall pretend not to be aware of. And when you come back I shall be so chokeful of gossip—may I say of scandal!—that I shall hardly know how to contain myself. We shall be very jolly, never fear."

It may be as well to explain that the "Aunt" Pell here alluded to stood in no closer relationship to Austin Chalgrave than that of cousin to his mother. She had been a widow for many years, and, after the death of Mrs. Chalgrave, senior, had come to reside at Dene Park, and to take charge of all indoor matters, in which post she had remained up to the time of Austin's marriage; since which event she

had gone to live in a pretty little cottage in the outskirts of Market Welby.

On the morning of the eleventh, Mrs. Chalgrave drove her husband to the station, and saw him off by the train for the North. When she got back home she found that Aunt Pell had arrived during her absence. After a few words of greeting, Francine went to her room, and was seen no more till luncheon time.

"She's been crying," remarked the widow to herself when Francine entered the room. "By the time she's been married half-a-dozen years she will have got cured of that nonsense. I remember that when Pell, poor man, used to leave home for a few days' fishing, it seemed quite a relief to get rid of him for a little while."

Austin Chalgrave had been ten months married. He was not far from forty years of age—a thin, wiry-looking man; his leanness causing him to seem taller than he really was. His aquiline features had a somewhat keen and eager expression, which, however, as well as the hard brightness of his blue-grey eyes, was toned down and softened by the pleasantly humorous smile which played by fits and starts round the corners of his mouth. His hair was cropped close, as were also his whiskers; while there was about him that indefinable something which proclaims the man whose tastes and proclivities are essentially equine.

Of his wife it may be said that, although those of her own sex would probably have set her down at her full age, which was five-and-twenty, few men would have guessed her as being so old by three or four years. She was good-looking, without being conspicuously so: having well-defined, clear-cut features, sparkling dark eyes, shaded by long, black lashes, and a great mass of wavy hair, which, if not absolutely black, was the nearest possible approach to it. Her mouth was small, but firm, and, by the time one had been a quarter of an hour in her company, she gave one the impression of being a woman of considerable individuality of character. As for her figure, it was perfection. Even those who were most inclined to cavil with her face could find no fault with that.

Never had the social circles of Market Welby and its neighbourhood—which included all the best families within a radius of a dozen miles—had a more disagreeable shock administered to them, than when Austin Chalgrave, of Dene Park, brought

home, without a word of warning, an entire stranger, as his bride.

Of course, one of the first questions people put to each other, as soon as they had recovered in some measure from the shock, was: "Who is Mrs. Chalgrave?" or, rather, "Who was Mrs. Chalgrave before her marriage?"

It was a question which no one in those parts was in a position to answer. She had come among them an utter stranger; and an utter stranger, so far as regarded her antecedents, she seemed likely to remain. At the end of ten months, the good folk of Market Welby knew no more who her "people" were, where Austin Chalgrave had "picked her up," at what place she had been married, and what her maiden name had been, than when first she appeared among them.

But if the ladies were inclined to look somewhat askance on Mrs. Chalgrave, and bandy spiteful remarks about her among themselves, the gentlemen were by no means inclined to follow their example, especially after she had once made her appearance in the hunting-field. The Pilberry Hunt could boast of several plucky lady riders, who did not often "muff" their jumps; but after the advent of Mrs. Chalgrave, they were one and all—in the expressive locution of the M.F.H.—compelled to "take a back seat."

"I never see a lady sit like her," Dobson the whip would remark. "I'm blessed if she and her 'oss don't seem all one piece."

More than once Sir Harry was heard to say:

"Where on earth can that woman have been brought up? She seems to understand more about horses, and to be able to get more out of them, than the lot of us put together."

Whatever else might be said or hinted to the discredit of Mrs. Chalgrave, no one could assert that she gave herself airs. She was, indeed, one of the most simple-mannered and unassuming of women.

For one thing, she never pretended to be more accomplished or better educated than she really was. She confessed at once that she could not sing, and that she never played in public, but only to please her husband when they were alone. Although fond of reading, she laughingly admitted that she rarely ventured on anything more solid than a novel. On the other hand, she spoke French as fluently and correctly as she spoke English; and it was

evident that she had seen something of the world, in view of the fact that her remarks about Paris and Berlin betrayed more than the mere casual tourist's acquaintance with those capitals.

It was the Hon. Mrs. Durville Lacy who first spoke of Francine as "that strange Mrs. Chalgrave;" and as Mrs. Durville Lacy was one of the shining lights of county society, and greatly looked up to by a host of lesser luminaries, the phrase was at once caught up and repeated from one to another, till, before long, it came to be Francine's accepted designation among such of the community as could not forgive Austin Chalgrave for having brought "a stranger whom nobody knew anything about," to be mistress of Dene Park.

CHAPTER II.

ON the fifth morning after Austin Chalgrave had left home, Francine was strolling listlessly in the garden, at a loss how best to get through the long autumn day with no more enlivening company than that of Aunt Pell, when the noise of footsteps on the gravel behind her caused her to turn her head. Next moment a cry broke from her, and she ran to meet the new-comer, holding out both her hands.

"Uncle Ambrose! Can it be really you?" she exclaimed, as she kissed him impulsively on both cheeks. "I can't tell you how happy it makes me to see you. I am more glad than you can think. But you look anxious and worried; nothing amiss with the business, I hope. But tell me, first of all, how aunt is."

She had linked an arm affectionately in one of his, and almost unconsciously had turned with him in the direction of the house.

"It's about your aunt, my dear, that I've come to see you. She's ill, Francine—very ill. Being at Ockminster this week—only thirty miles away—nothing would content her but that I must come over and see you, and hear from your own lips that you are well and happy. But it was all to satisfy your aunt, my dear, or else I wouldn't have ventured to intrude."

"It's no intrusion, Uncle Ambrose; and my husband would say the same if he were here. Poor dear aunt! how grieved I am to hear that she is ill! If it will be any consolation to her, you may tell her that no one could be more happy and comfortable than I am."

"Ah! now she'll have no cause to worry about you any longer."

Presently Francine said:

"Do you know what I've a great mind to do, Uncle Ambrose? To go back with you to Ockminster on purpose to see Aunt Celestine! You may not be so near Dene Park again for goodness knows how long; and it seems a shame to let the opportunity go by."

Uncle Ambrose stopped suddenly, and looked very hard at her.

"My dear child, if you only could!" he said, "if you only could! I believe that to have you with her, if only for an hour or two, would do your aunt more good than all the doctors' stuff in the world."

He was a man of sixty, and when in his prime must have been eminently good-looking. He had a plentiful head of hair, worn rather long, and a small imperial; both one and the other being in colour a deep, lustrous black. Black, too, were his clothes, about which there was a roomy ease which proved that at his time of life he studied comfort rather than elegance. Of the same sombre hue was the black satin stock, full six inches in depth, and fastened with a buckle behind, after the style of forty years ago, the flowing ends of which were held in their place by a large cameo pin.

"Come indoors and have some breakfast," said Francine, "and then we will see what can be done."

A consultation of the time-table informed her that there was a train from Market Welby to Ockminster at noon, and a return train at seven p.m., by availing herself of which she would be able to spend about six hours in her aunt's company. Half an hour later uncle and niece were on their way to the station.

Six o'clock brought Aunt Pell a brief telegram to the effect that Mrs. Chalgrave had decided to stay overnight at Ockminster, and that the dog-cart was to be at the station to meet her at eleven o'clock next forenoon.

By half-past eleven next day she was back at home.

Aunt Pell, who was a keen-sighted lady in her way, did not fail to notice that there was a restlessness, an inability to remain long in one place, or to settle down to any occupation or employment for more than a few minutes at a time, the like of which she had never noticed in Francine before.

"People don't fidget about in that way

for nothing," remarked the old lady, sagely, to herself. "There's something more under the surface than she's willing to let be seen."

It wanted a few minutes to six o'clock when, as Aunt Pell was crossing the entrance-hall, she came full on Francine, evidently on the point of going out—in fact, the brougham was already waiting for her at the door. She was dressed as the elder lady had never seen her dressed before—in black from head to foot, with a thick veil, which hid the upper part of her face, but possibly was not quite such an effective disguise as she believed it to be.

"I am going into Welby to do a little special shopping," she said. "I will endeavour to get back in time for dinner; but should I not do so, I beg that you won't wait for me."

Francine disliked the brougham, and rarely used it, except when going with her husband to a dinner-party, or ball. As a rule she either rode, or drove in the dog-cart; yet here she was, on this fine August afternoon, going out with something of an air of mystery—of disguise, it might almost be said—in a vehicle which she ordinarily contemned!

Aunt Pell shook her head, and rubbed one mitted hand softly over the other as she gazed after her.

In all probability she would have shaken her head still more emphatically had she been there to see how Francine, leaving the brougham waiting in a secluded lane, went forward into the town alone, her veil carefully lowered; and how, after an absence of about half an hour, she came back, still alone, and, re-entering the brougham, was driven home.

Next day, Francine was dull and apathetic to a degree. Of her restlessness of the day before there was not a trace left. She complained of a slight headache, and sat the morning through on a rocking-chair on the verandah, with a novel on her lap, but making no pretence of reading it. Of appetite, either at breakfast or luncheon, she had none.

About half-past six she ordered Sweetlips, her favourite mare, to be brought round, and went upstairs and donned her riding-habit.

"This headache is driving me distracted," she said to Aunt Pell. "I will go for a gallop, and try whether that will have any effect on it."

When she came down, she found the

groom waiting to accompany her on her ride as usual.

"I am not going far, Dyce, and shall not need you," she said to the man.

She rode at a slow, swinging canter as far as Dudham Spinney, an extensive covert of young trees and brushwood, about two miles from the Park. It was a lonely spot, and not a creature was in sight as she dismounted. Leading Sweetlips well into the shelter of the Spinney, she fastened her to a tree, and then went forward alone, holding up the skirt of her habit with one hand, and having her riding-whip in the other, till she found herself in a little glade, or clearance, in the heart of the wood. Her lips were hard-set, and her brows drawn together till they nearly met, while in her eyes there shone a sort of dull, lurid light, which would have come as a revelation to Austin Chalgrave, had he been there to see it.

For a moment she pressed a hand to her heart while she gazed around. The next, a man stepped from behind a clump of trees and confronted her.

She eyed him for a second or two as she might have eyed some loathsome reptile. Then, in her iciest tones, she said:

"It is well that you are punctual. Have you brought what was agreed upon?"

"They are here;" touching the breast-pocket of his coat. "And you?"

"What I promised I am here to perform. Give me the letters, and the money is yours."

He was a tall, thin man, probably not more than thirty years of age, but looking considerably older. There was an assumption of jauntiness both in his dress and manner; but it was a jauntiness which had evidently been put on for the occasion. Although he wore an orchid in his button-hole, his clothes had the appearance of not having been brushed for a month, while the soiled glove he carried in his right hand was not the fellow to the one he wore on his left.

From the pocket of her habit Francine brought out a porte-monnaie, and, opening it, extracted therefrom a number of bank-notes which had evidently been placed there in readiness. Meanwhile Laforge, for such was his name, with tremulous fingers and an evil smile on his lips, was slowly unbuttoning his coat. When this was accomplished he drew from the breast-pocket a thin bundle of letters tied round with dingy white ribbon.

"Behold them," he said, "six in all. Count them, if you doubt my word. They are the last links of a love which at one time I fondly hoped would last as long as life itself. It grieves me to the heart to be compelled to part with them; but I am poor—very poor. With them I bid adieu to the romance of my youth, to happy days now vanished for ever."

He spoke with a cynical leer, which caused Francine's soul to turn sick within her.

Still leering at her out of the corners of his red-rimmed eyes, he pressed the letters to his lips, and then proffered them with one hand, while holding out the other in readiness to clutch the notes. A shiver ran through Francine as her fingers closed over the letters. After one glance at them she thrust them into her pocket. Laforge, after counting the notes, put them carefully away and rebuttoned his coat. Francine, her object accomplished, was on the point of turning away, when Laforge spoke again:

"And are we to part thus, sweet Francine, without one little kiss, or even one touch of the hand—you and I, who used to live only for each other!" As before, there was a ring of bitter mockery in his words. "But no! If you can part with me thus coldly, I cannot so part from you. I am not made of ice. I love you more at this moment than ever before. Not thus shall you leave me. One kiss at least I will claim in memory of other days!"

He strode forward as if to seize her. As he did so Francine receded a step, and the same instant her whip came down with a sharp hiss, and smote him across the face. An imprecation broke from his lips, and with one arm held up to shield his face from a second lash, he fell back a pace or two in sheer amazement. Then, with clenched hands and a snarl which severed his blue-white lips and bared his teeth, he gathered himself for a spring. But at that moment an ominous click smote his ear; and there, in a line with his eyes, he beheld Francine's extended hand grasping a revolver.

"Coward!" she exclaimed, in clear, cold tones. "Come but one step nearer, and I will shoot you down like the dastard and cur that you are!"

On the instant the fellow's face faded to a sickly, greenish hue; a craven terror leapt into his eyes; he seemed to shrink visibly in size as he stood there.

For a few seconds they confronted each other.

"So!" said Laforge, at last, with a futile attempt at a sneer. "This is your game, is it? Well! you have won for the present; but if you think that you have done with Victor Laforge, you were never more mistaken, as you will quickly find. You shall hear further from me, madame, in the course of a day or two. We part, but only to meet again."

Half a minute later Francine was alone.

Neither of them, at the instant Francine lashed Laforge across the face, had seen an arm part the bushes a little way from where they were standing, as if the owner of it were about to declare himself. But the branches closed again when the Frenchman fell back in terror at sight of the revolver.

CHAPTER III.

It was on the evening of the day following that of Francine's adventure in Dudham Spinney, that Austin Chalgrave reached home in a fly hired at the railway-station. He had not been expected for another week, and had sent no word of his coming. Aunt Pell met him in the entrance-hall, half-a-dozen questions fluttering on her lips; but there was something in his face which warned her that for the present it would be advisable to keep them back.

"Where's Francine?" he demanded, abruptly.

"In her own room, where she has been all day. She's suffering from one of her sick headaches."

Without another word he strode upstairs.

Francine, who had seen him as he drove up in the fly, was standing in the doorway of her dressing-room as he mounted the stairs. She had not changed her morning wrapper for any other dress, and her unbound hair fell in heavy masses over her shoulders. She did not spring forward to receive him, as she would have done at another time, but waited for him with the immobility of a statue.

"Back before my time, dear, as you see," he said, cheerily, as he took both her hands in his. "Why I am so, I will explain later on."

He drew her towards him, and made as though he would have kissed her.

"No," she said, "you must not kiss me

till you have heard what I am about to tell you. After that, most likely you will never want to kiss me again."

"Oh, indeed," he answered, with a short laugh, "we shall very soon know all about that." Speaking thus, he drew her into the room, and shut the door. "And now, what is this terrible news which is to have such a remarkable effect on me?" he said, resting a hand on each of her shoulders, and looking her steadily in the face.

She drew a deep breath, and, bending forward a little, let her forehead rest for a moment or two against his shoulder. When she lifted her head he could see the mark left by her teeth on her under-lip in her effort to control her emotion. There was no vestige of colour in her face; her eyes were dry and burning, and looked as if they were athirst for the relief of tears. She pointed to a chair, and then seated herself in another a little distance away.

"Three days ago," she began, "I was surprised by a visit from Uncle Ambrose. He is at Ockminster for the week, and, being so near, he had come over to see me. Aunt Celestine is very ill. Not knowing when I might have another opportunity, I went back with him by the first train in order to spend a few hours with my aunt. My intention had been to return the same evening; but while Uncle Ambrose was away, Mademoiselle de Laune—she who succeeded me as 'Queen of the Haute Ecole'—had been suddenly taken ill, and could not possibly appear that evening. It was a 'bespoke night.' The mayor and the officers at the barracks had taken tickets, and uncle was nearly at his wife's end; the officers, especially, having expressed a great desire to see Mademoiselle de Laune. It grieved me much to see poor uncle so put about; and on the impulse of the moment I offered to stay and take mademoiselle's place in the programme. It was very wrong and foolish of me; but I did it. In my riding-habit and hat, and with a 'fall,' which reached to within half-an-inch of my mouth, no one among the audience knew me for other than Mademoiselle de Laune. I could not have rested without telling you. Can you forgive me?"

Leaving her last question unanswered, Chalgrave said:

"You are mistaken; there was one person among the audience who recognised you the moment you rode into the ring."

She drew in her breath quickly, as if some one had struck her.

"Surely—surely you must be mistaken," she exclaimed. "With my features hidden by the veil, who could possibly know me?"

"Your husband," he answered, quietly. "Oh! You there?"

"Even so; and, strange as the coincidence may seem, the explanation is a very simple one." He then went on to tell her how Protheroe—one of the men he had met at the shooting party in Yorkshire—had been taken seriously ill; how the local doctor had advised his immediate removal; how he, Chalgrave, had proffered to see the sick man safe to his home at Ockminster; how, while strolling about the Ockminster streets, his attention had been attracted by an immense poster, announcing that "Perrin's Renowned Cirque de l'Univers" was there "for six nights only." And how he there and then made up his mind to revisit the old "tent" under the canvas roof of which he had once on a time spent so many happy hours. "But when you, Francine, rode into the ring on your 'coal-black Andalusian barb, Don Gomez,'" he went on, "I recognised you in a moment; and then I had, indeed, need to ask myself whether I was awake or dreaming. I watched you go through the act with all the grace and aplomb of other days; and when it came to an end, no hands applauded more vigorously than mine. Next evening I was at the circus again; but Mademoiselle Francine was conspicuous by her absence. I could, of course, have gone to good old Uncle Ambrose, and have learnt from him the why and wherefore of my wife's appearance on the scene of her old triumphs; but such a course did not recommend itself to me. I chose rather to wait and see whether she would tell me about it of her own accord. My confidence in her has been justified: she has told me."

"And can you forgive me?" demanded Francine, for the second time.

"I will try my best to do so," he answered, with a smile which conveyed far more than his words.

She gave him an answering smile; but there was nothing of gladness in it. Then she rose abruptly and crossed to the window, and stood looking out. Chalgrave's eyes followed her.

"Does she intend her confession to end here?" he asked himself; "or is that other strange episode about to be included in it?"

"Now that we have each of us had our

say, and the thing's explained and done with, am I not to be rewarded with a kiss?" he asked, as his wife came slowly back from the window.

"All has not yet been said; far from it." She sat down as before, on a low chair a little way removed from him. "Years ago, before I knew you," she went on, "I fancied myself in love with a young man of the name of Victor Laforge. He was a member of my uncle's troupe; very clever on the trapeze, and very good-looking. I was a child of sixteen at the time, and he fascinated me. There is no other word to express the feeling with which he inspired me, for assuredly it was not love, as that word has since come to be understood by me. I was his employer's niece, and he encouraged me, thinking, possibly, that it would not be a bad thing for him if, by-and-by, he could make me his wife. After a time, however, he was tempted by the offer of more money to join another troupe. A little later came the news of his marriage. I shed a great many foolish tears at first; but, by the time I was a year older, the image of Victor Laforge had become but a faded memory which rarely intruded itself into my thoughts, and never without an inward blush. Conceive, then, my surprise when, in the stable-help who assisted me to mount Don Gomez, I recognised Laforge! To such a condition had he sunk. After the performance, he contrived to secure two minutes in private with me, when, wretch that he is! he threatened that unless I gave him a hundred pounds in exchange for certain foolish letters—six in number—which I had been weak enough to write to him during the period of my infatuation, and which he had still by him, he would expose me by forwarding them to my husband."

"You set the scoundrel at defiance, I hope, and bade him do his worst," broke in Austin.

"Would to Heaven that I had! But his threat frightened me. I had no time to think. I agreed to meet him next evening but one in Dudham Spinney, when he was to bring the letters, and I, if possible, the money. Oh! it was weak and foolish of me; I feel and know it now."

"If you had but sent for me!" muttered Chalgrave.

"And now comes another shameful thing for me to have to tell you. I had paid away the greater part of my quarter's

allowance, and there was only one way in which I could make up the amount demanded by Laforge."

She paused, and for a few moments the pallor of her cheeks was ousted by a vivid blush.

"And that way?" asked her husband, quietly.

"Was by pawning my jewels," she answered, in a low voice, covering her face with her hands.

"My poor Francie! What you must have gone through before you made up your mind to do that! But go on. You met the fellow."

"I met him, as appointed, and handed over the money to him, and he gave me in return what I believed, at the time, to be the whole of my letters. Then he insulted me, and I lashed him across the face with my whip. Then he would have seized me; but I had taken the precaution to arm myself with one of your revolvers, and as, like all cowards, he sets a high value on his worthless life, he did not choose to face it, but slunk away."

"Shall I tell her by what simple means it came to pass that I was an unseen witness of the interview in the Spinney?" asked Chalgrave of himself. "Yes, I will tell her; but not till later on. She has not yet brought her confession to an end."

"My intention was to burn the letters, the moment I reached home," resumed Francine; "but when I came to untie the bundle, I found how I had been tricked. There were two of my letters, one at the top, and another at the bottom; but between them there was nothing but blank paper. Laforge had kept back four out of the six letters."

"The villain—the unmitigated villain!" ejaculated Chalgrave.

"Then I understood the meaning of his parting threat, that I had not seen the last of him, but that I should hear from him again before long."

"Of course, having succeeded in getting a hundred pounds out of you on such ridiculously easy terms, he hopes to be able to sell you the rest of the letters for as much more. But I fancy that, this time, he has reckoned without his host."

"And now I have told you everything," said Francine, with a half sob in her voice. "If you wish me to leave you, I will go quietly away, without a word to any one."

Austin stared at her in sheer astonishment. "If I wish you to leave me! What on earth are you talking about?"

"After what I have told you, you can never care for me as you did before."

"Oh, indeed! that's your idea, is it?" he answered, with his short laugh, as he went and sat down beside her, and drawing her to him, kissed her tenderly. "Why, what a goose you must be, Francie, to let such a thought enter your head for one moment! Leave me, indeed! Not for—but there! I've no patience even to speak of such a thing."

"But I have deceived you—shamefully deceived you—and——"

"Hush, my dear! You must not say that. You are letting your tongue run away with you. You have not deceived me. In asserting that you have, you are making a mountain out of a molehill, as I am afraid your sex is too often in the habit of doing. That you were weak and foolish, in allowing yourself to be frightened by Laforge's threats into meeting him and paying him the hundred pounds, I am willing to admit; but I dare say that, in your place, the majority of women would have done the same. Now listen to a plain man's view of the whole affair."

He kissed her again. Her head was resting on his shoulder, and the tears, so long denied her, were falling as softly as summer rain.

"In the first place," resumed Chalgrave, "you did quite right to help your uncle out of the predicament he found himself in, owing to the illness of Mademoiselle de Laune. Had I been asked, I should certainly have sanctioned your doing as you did. Even had you been recognised by any of our Market Welby friends, I should have cared little about it; for, although I have not thought it necessary to advertise the fact that my wife was, at one time, known as—to quote the old jargon—the 'world-renowned Queen of the Haute École,' no faintest blush would tinge my cheek if it were trumpeted forth

next market-day from the steps of Welby Town Hall. I am proud of my wife, not ashamed of her; and her position in life before I married her is a matter which concerns myself alone. And, now, as regards that scoundrel, Laforge. The moment he threatened you, you should have communicated at once with me, and have left me to deal with him. To pay him a hundred pounds for a few trumpery letters, which were really not worth as many pence, was a piece of folly on your part, dear, such as I am glad to think you will never have the chance of perpetrating again. Not one penny of blackmail would he have got out of me."

"But I could not bear to let you think that I had even fancied I cared for any one before I learnt to care for you—although I was little more than a child at the time!"

"Foolish girl! What could it have mattered? See what a pothor you have got yourself into, all about a thing of no consequence."

"But he has still four of the letters in his possession."

"We shall hear from him in the course of a post or two, never fear. He will name his price for the rest of the letters, and demand an interview. I will meet him in your place."

"And you will decline to give him anything for the letters?"

"Most assuredly. Don't you see that, if I refuse to buy them, they at once become of no value—no better than so much waste paper, in point of fact? I shall take the wind out of his sails most completely by refusing to treat with him at any price, while, if he should be so ill-advised as to attempt to annoy you in any way in time to come, we shall see whether the far-reaching arm of the Law won't avail to protect you. Make your mind easy, sweetest, you have seen and heard the last of Victor Laforge."



REAR 2000 1907 MAR 17 1907

APR 18 1911 FEB 14 1911

APR 28 1893

FEB 26 1894

FEB 4 1895

FEB 28 1895

DEC 22 1903
MAR 8 1900

